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CELTICS PRIDE



"Larry Legend"



He's Baaaack!! And So Are The Celtics

Volume 6, Issue 8 March 15, 1991 \$3.00



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CELTICS PRIDE

Volume 6 Issue 8
Number 108
March 15, 1991



Cover.....

8.....He's Baaack!!
Larry Bird's back is better and he has returned to the line-up and brought life back to the Celtics game. Cover photography by Steve Lipofsky.

Features.....

7Ducky Mead Is Heard But Not Seen

The Celtics New England scout is a quiet, jovial man with a sharp basketball mind. While most fans don't know who he is, he plays a very important role in the organization.

9Reggie Has Reached Stardom

When Larry went down, the Celtics looked around for someone to step forward. Reggie Lewis was that man. He has pushed himself to a higher level in the NBA.

11Derek Has Learned The Hard Way

Derek Smith has yet to play for the Celtics, but he has already learned to appreciate being in Boston.

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All photography in this magazine is shot on Kodak film.

Sound Off.....

Christmas On Dec. 28?

Dear Sound Off,

I just wanted to tell you about my first time to see the Celtics in person. My friend Jeff and I are lifelong Celtics fans, we have always had the dream of seeing our heroes in person. All of our attempts to get to see the Celts at "the Garden" have come up short, but December 28, 1990, we got lucky and a friend of ours in Atlanta got us some great tickets for the Celtics- Hawks game at the OMNI. Christmas didn't come for us until Dec. 28, last year! We got up early and left on our six hour drive to Atlanta that morning dressed in all the green we could gather up, smiling and high-fiving all the way to the OMNI. Our friend handed us the tickets, we couldn't believe it, we made it! When we got to the game it was like being at a big party. There were green jackets and shirts everywhere!

Well, the guys on the floor played the Hawks that night in what seemed to be the best game the Hawks have played this season. No matter what the score was, we kept cheering when our Celtics scored or made big plays! I think that's what separates the Boston Celtics team and fans from the rest of the NBA, PRIDE. We all left saying, "Wait until they come back to the Garden," The guys in green on the court may have had a bad night, but the guys in the green in the stands had a great one!

Keep up the great work at Celtics Pride and Go Celtics!

Mike Muphree
Medina, TN

Bird Is The Word

Dear Sound Off,

I have been a die-hard Celtic fan all my life and enjoy Celtic's Pride. It's funny it took an injury to Larry to make us realize that he is still a very valuable part of this franchise. I still feel that he is one of the best in the game, he does all the little things in the game to win that never show up in the box score. Simply put, Larry is basketball at it's ultimate form. He has mastered the game itself and made it into a science. Yes, indeed!

Larry is still the living legend, and until he hangs up the sneakers, "Bird is the Word", still will hold true.

Best of luck to the Celtics and Larry. Bring us number seventeen!!!

Gary Giro
Millbury, MA

Celtics Pride agrees with your sentiments, and believes that if Larry can stay healthy, the Celtics have a great shot at number 17!

Awesome!

Dear Sound Off,

Like most Celtic fans, when the Celtics drafted Dee Brown I had no idea who he was, but I was going to find out very soon.

When I saw the NBA Slam-Dunk Contest I could not believe my eyes. This guy was awesome! He pumped up his shoes before every dunk. Then he thrilled the crowd with an awesome array of Jams!

Hey, Bo may know diddly, but Dee knows Slam, Jam, Bam!!

Thanks, Dee, for your great performance.

Phill Needler
Albany, IN

A Reason For Living?

Dear Sound Off,

Chris Ford has done a remarkable job with the Celtics this year and I feel that he and Don Nelson are the top coaches in the league.

However, during the Celtics' trip to Phoenix on Feb. 19, there was one scoring opportunity that the Celtics let slip away.

Just before half-time, Phoenix scored. Boston had the ball with 1.4 seconds left, Bird inbounded the ball in the backcourt and there was no opportunity for a high percentage shot.

I felt the Celtics could have scored or drawn a foul by calling a time out and taking the ball out in the forecourt, and setting up a play.

It could be that the Celtics did not have any time-outs left, nevertheless, I see teams do this all the time. I feel that the points scored before half-time are just as important as when the game is on the line.

By the way, Celtics Pride is one of my reasons for living.

Thank you,
Kevin Fitzmaurice

The Celtics did not have a "time-out left." With only 1.4 seconds left, there would be no such thing as a high percentage shot.

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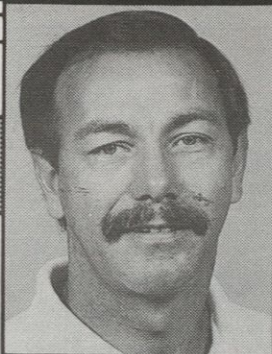
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March 15, 1991



By Chris Ford

Coaches Corner

Goals Were Fulfilled On The West Coast

I felt very good about what we were able to accomplish on our western trip early in February. I was asked about this with the media a few weeks ago, and they immediately poked fun at me when I responded that we need to get better. Still, I'm not insensitive to the fact that I was proud of our effort on the west coast. It was a ballyhoed trip and we went up against a number of good clubs and did the job.

But we have a number of difficult games coming up, too. We have San Antonio in the Garden March 1 and a pair of games against the Portland Trail Blazers.

It was ironic; we anticipated a number of questions about the trip when we returned to Boston. But no one seemed to pay any mind to our next game against the New Jersey Nets. The "lowly" Nets! The same Nets with great talent like Derrick Coleman, Chris Morris (coming off a career high in rebounds) and Mookie Blaylock.

The same Nets who defeated us in the Boston Garden January 18th, when everybody thought all we had to do to win was mail it in. The lessons of history are quickly forgotten, which is why I keep saying we have to concentrate on the all — one game at a time.

But some reflections on the West Coast Trip.

DEFENSE. This was the key factor in the roadshow. Throughout basketball at all levels, from the high school competition of my son Christopher to the professional ranks, defense is the constant in a wide sea of variables. And we had ourselves together in key parts of both the Seattle and Golden State games and then especially in the win over the Lakers, against a Hall of Famer like Magic Johnson and James Worthy.

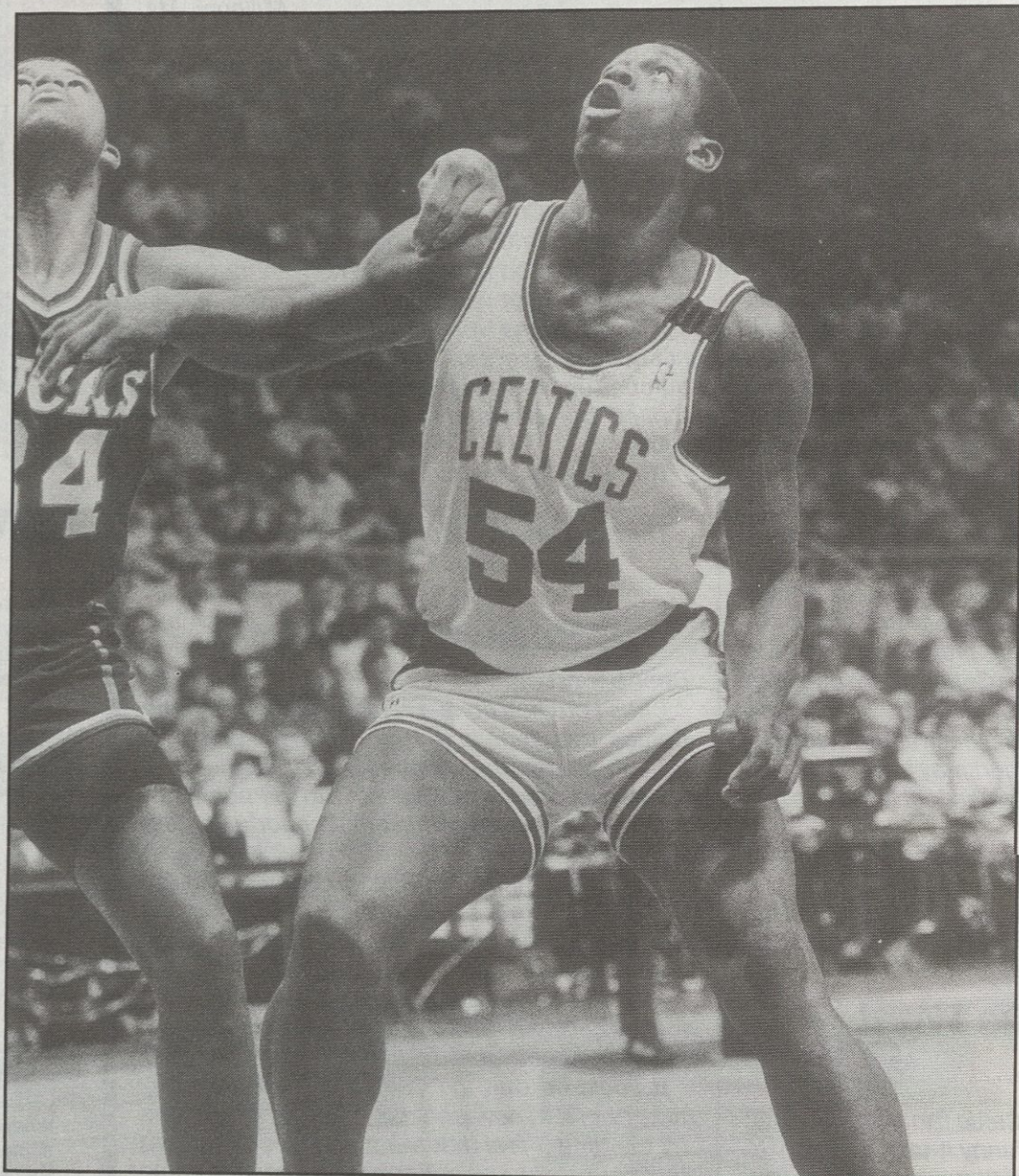
I think our guys recognized that we had to stop guys to win on a tough extended trip like the one we were on.

We played both great position defense as well as being aggressive and showing the desire to come up with loose balls.

INJURY. We showed good sense of purpose, because we had some troubling injuries. Kevin McHale had a badly sprained ankle in Seattle and Larry Bird's back is a continual concern, though with the work and vigilance of Ed Lacerte and Dan Dyrac, we have been able to keep that situation together. Then, Reggie Lewis suffered a badly pulled groin muscle in Phoenix, in a struggling last second play, trying to save a rebound off the floor.

Bird's back was still sore after receiving a vicious blow to it in Seattle. But he — and we — carried on.

THE CHARTER. Beginning with our trip to Minnesota after the Super Bowl Sunday game against the Lakers, we have begun chartering and this had been a particular boost to all of us throughout the organi-



Our key player on the trip was Eddie Pinckney.

zation. First, we have more control over the distractions at the airport (the waits, for example, which can become numbing during a long season). Secondly, we have been helped medically; Larry and Kevin were able to receive round the clock treatment. Finally and most importantly, I think it's a great move because our players know that our management is solidly supportive to our efforts. Our energy level is higher and on the road, it's a critical factor.

THE CELTICS FOR REAL. I think, yes, our self-confidence as a team was helped by the facts: we were able to get out on the road and show people that our great early season start was no fluke. There was a real sense out there that opponents regarded us as a legitimate play-off team.

We have ambitions to do very very well in the play-offs, even if they are light years away right now.

Again, you go back to the work we did defensively, the price we were willing to pay to win. Defense, though, is secondary; we showed we attained the concentration level to pull together to win.

We executed our offense down the

stretch extraordinarily well down the stretch against Seattle, Golden State and the Lakers. We put the Nuggets away early, an important factor when you are going up against a team that is down on the standings and you're playing them on their homecourt.

We had an opportunity to sweep the trip except for some poor shooting, including poor free throw shooting in Phoenix, but I am not complaining.

THE BENCH. We needed help here, and because of the injury problem noted above. Our key player on the trip here was Eddie Pinckney. He played some of his best basketball on this trip, played very hard, very focused. I'm unconcerned about his scoring; rather I look for defense and rebounding from Pinckney, and running the lanes. If he's out there working, the shots will fall his way.

BIRD AND PARISH. I won't say we're playing better 100% because of Larry's return. I will say that Larry came back and his game is very sharp already, as it has been all season. We are playing better as a team since he's been back.

And weren't reports dismissing Robert Parish as a major factor anymore because of age premature? I think so!

He went out on the trip and showed that at age 37 he can still play at a high level. I think Robert would have been displeased if he hadn't played this well, too. From the beginning of the trip to the end, when he had 21 points and 20 rebounds in Phoenix, he was outstanding.

I have no problems with our Big Three, Robert, Larry and Kevin McHale. If they're healthy, they produce All Star numbers.

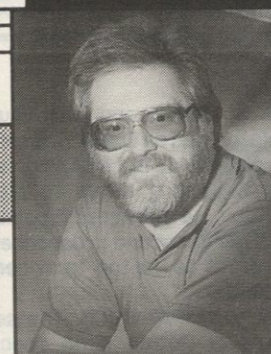
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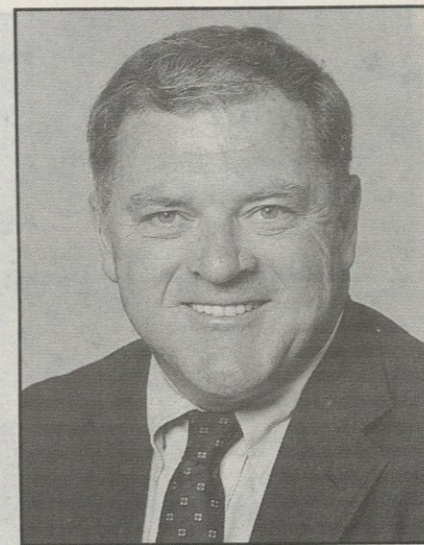
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By Jim Bianchine

Color It Green

If It Ain't Broke — Don't Fix It



Gavitt: Happy with his hand.

What was that about not fixing something that isn't broken? CEO Dave Gavitt is certainly wise enough to know how the old saying goes as the trading deadline passed and the Celtics stood pat as they should have.

Gavitt was often pressed by the media trying to read his mind and print his thoughts on the subject, but said little and as far as trading, did even less. Sure he kept his eyes open, but showed a reluctance to make any moves that would be unsettling or in any way destroy the chemistry of a team that is currently leading its division by 11.5 games over its nearest rival (Philadelphia) and a whopping 17.5 over the third place New York Knicks, in what many felt was going to be a three-team race at the outset of the season.

Actually, he had already made a big move some time ago as the Celtics have a fine player in Derek Smith waiting in the wings and is sure to add depth to an already stable squad.

All teams have a personality, good or bad, and the old and the new faces have certainly formed a strong one in the Hub this season, and the Boston brass wasn't about to tamper with it. In some ways, they bear a striking resemblance to some of the teams of Celtics lore that added to the 16 Championship banners hanging proudly from the Boston Garden rafters. Tommy Heinsohn's 1976 team that won a dramatic series against Phoenix is the first to come to mind.

Though each team has its own individuality, no matter which one Celtics fans may compare it to, this edition has that championship look, or at least the right makeup. They have a legitimate chance to go all the way.

They know they can win. They are brimming with confidence, realize their collective capabilities and have all the parts. They have confidence in one another and are gushing with that same confidence in first-year coach Chris Ford who instilled belief in themselves from the beginning and has done quite a job maintaining it.

Of course, winning has plenty to do with the upkeep. Currently the Celtics boast a sparkling 40-13 record, despite losing superstar Larry Bird for 15 games and suffering seven of those losses in his absence. They have that little something extra that it takes to win, considering they have won 40 of 53 games despite sore backs and bad ankles. The mark of a good team is dealing with all kinds of adversity and their record proves the point.

Sure, every team has some limitations and even the best can get better. The Celtics feel they are already strong enough to accomplish their ultimate goal of winning yet another NBA championship. With their success, who is going to argue with them?

I, for one, applaud the moves Dave Gavitt and company didn't make. You may too, come spring.

Seattle coach (sounds funny, doesn't it)

Celtics is their guard problems. They simply have too many and their rotation seems to be all fouled up as K.C. is trying to keep everyone happy with playing time. It is so unsettled. In a curious move, they rid themselves of both a big talent and huge problem when they dealt Dale Ellis to the Bucks for All-Star Ricky Pierce. Why did the Bucks deal Pierce? They were having big problems with him over his contract and chose not to deal with it any longer. Only time will tell on who made out in that trade. Probably both will prosper... The Rockets have shown what they are made of without injured Akeem Olajuwon. In the super centers absence, they are 13-10 and assured themselves a winning mark without him as he is due back in two games from surgery to repair damage to an eye socket... So much has been made over the Suns acquisition of Xavier McDaniel. How about the Sonics' acquisition of Eddie Johnson? They are 19-17 since the trade. In years to come, though, everyone is talking about talented youngster Shawn Kemp and Derrick McKey could emerge as a true All-Star in the Pacific Northwest... The Hawks' Spud Webb tallied a career-high 30 points in a loss to the Bulls... Utah's John Stockton made a career-high nine steals against the Rockets... With all the hoopla over Nets rookie Derrick Coleman, and the Kings woes, Lionel Simmons' 38 points against the Sixers seemed to get lost somewhere in the Southern California sun.

Another member of the Kings having a fine year without any fanfare is Antoine Carr. He scored a career-high 35 points and topped it three days later with 41. He also tallied a career best seven blocks against the Clippers... Successive losses to the Bulls and the Pacers at home marked the first time the Pistons ever lost two games in a row at Auburn Hills. Joe Dumars' last-second hoop to edge Seattle, kept it from being three straight. Revenge must have been sweet. The Pacers' Michael Williams, who rode the pine last season as a rookie with the Pistons, was a perfect 8-of-8 and five for five from the line against them in the Pacers biggest win of the season... At last look, the Pistons are 25-3 against teams with sub-.500 records, which includes their latest loss in Charlotte... The Nets ended a 7-game slide in a big way against the Hawks, racking up 140 points in a 34-point win. It was a season-high for the Nets... Southern hospitality has been thrown out the window in Dixie where the Hawks have won 18 in a row at home. During that stretch, they have lost nine of 10 on the road... The Cavs (Feb. 12-13) won consecutive games only for the first time since November, topping Miami and Dallas... In this publication the Celtics Kevin Gamble has been called a "slasher" and a "cheater," both honorable in basketball terms. Call him what you will, at the All-Star break he was leading the league in FG percentage, an honor usually reserved for low-post players... The Celtics avoided their first-ever sweep to the Warriors with a win at Golden State. Each of the last two years, the home team has lost... A quick tip of the hat to Detroit's Chuck Daly who was chosen to coach the 1992 USA Olympic team. I, for one, can't wait to see participation by NBA players... The Celtics (40-13), Chicago (38-14) and Detroit (37-18) are really having it out for the best record in the

Eastern Conference... Miami scored a franchise-record 141 points in a 141-112 romp over Denver. They broke their record of 134 set eight days earlier against the Nets... Two nights later they scored a season-low 78 in a loss to the Cavs... The Bulls 38-14 mark is their best ever after 52 games. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but I, for one, simply don't think they are that good. Rumor has it they are riddled with internal strife and that can eat away at the best of teams when the real pressure is on in the playoffs...

The Pistons still play a nasty brand of defense. They are 17-0 when holding opponents under 90 points and 33-4 limiting them to 99 or less under 100... Orlando's franchise-record four-game win streak was snapped by Seattle. A recent look at the standings showed expansion progress was nearly equal. That glance showed three teams all with 15-36 marks. The Wolves had the edge with a 17-34 record... The Kings shocked the Sixers with a 17-0 start to begin the game and went on to a 98-81 win without both starting guards. They were without Travis Mays and Rory Sparrow that evening... It is somewhat of a surprise that old buddies Elgin Baylor (Clippers GM) and Lakers GM Jerry West didn't work something out when the Lakers were after Benjamin... The Nets' Coleman scored a rookie-high 42 points against Denver, the highest output by any first-year player this season. Coleman had never scored 40 points in high school or college... The Suns, after six unsuccessful tries, beat the Spurs with David Robinson... It took until Feb. 17, but the Heat finally won back-to-back games, topping Denver and the Hornets... Why were the Rockets successful without Akeem? How about the efforts of Larry Smith and Otis Thorpe? In a win against the Suns, they combined for 45 rebounds, including 25 by Smith. It marked the fourth time in the Rockets' history that two men hauled down 20 rebounds in the same game.

One thing that seems to be forgotten when talking about the Lakers success is their defense. They are second in the league and one of only two teams holding foes to less than 100 points a game (99.1)... There are only two teams in the NBA that own a winning mark in Seattle in the team's 24-year history, playing in the Kingdome and the Coliseum. They are the Celtics and the Sixers... In the three clashes heard around the NBA between Portland and the Lakers, LA has won two... The Bucks were living on the edge two straight games. Ironically with 80 seconds remaining in back-to-back contests, they trailed by five points, but managed to win in OT against Charlotte and Orlando... Detroit's biggest margin of the season on the losing end came at the hands of the Knicks who beat them, 116-88. It was their worst loss since the Celtics spanked them by 38 points three years ago... By the way, the Pistons are 9-5 without All-Star guard Isiah Thomas. However, the long, hard minutes on the rest of the team in his absence seems to be taking its toll... The Spurs have fallen out of first-place in the Midwest Division after dropping six of eight games without guard Rod Strickland who is out with a broken hand... Washington rookie A.J. English scored a career-high 31 against the Cavs. Had to get the Bullets in this column somehow.

Jim Bianchine is a columnist for the Newburyport Daily News, in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Jim is regularly assigned to cover the Boston Celtics.





By Kevin C. Doyle

Halfcourt Press

What Goes Around, Comes Around

Can there be any reasonable man who doesn't understand the need to keep your game face on for a full 48 minutes in the NBA?

Is it realistic for anyone to think the top teams can consistently subdue those beneath them simply by turning on the juice at the appropriate moment?

For a multitude of reasons, those days — if they ever truly existed — are long gone and hard to find. Given the talent and skill level of NBA athletes, any team is capable of beating another like a rented mule when provided the slightest opportunity.

Less than a week after its well-chronicled occurrence, the Celtics' Great Western Road Swing seemed a distant memory.

Why? The rather shaky three-game spell that followed.

After scorching Golden State, the Lakers and Denver in consecutive games, a sloppy showing and fourth-period fade in a 109-105 loss at Phoenix cost the Celts a first-ever February road sweep of the West.

That left them in an ornery mood for their February 22nd "home" game against New

Jersey in Hartford. The Celtics packed about 10 minutes of sound, two-way play into the second half of that win to offset an otherwise lackluster performance.

(A personal aside here — it may say "home" on the schedule, but to me Hartford is simply a city with a nice facility and no team to call its own. Why not Worcester, Springfield, Providence, R.I. or Portland, Maine?)

The worst, though, was still to come as the Celtics succumbed to (Reggie) Miller Time. Indiana's gifted gunner with the sweet "J" guided the Pacers back from a 15-point third period deficit by pouring in 18 fourth-quarter points in a 115-109 Indiana win. Boston allowed the Pacers a slit to slide through and they proceeded to blow a gaping hole through the Celtics' defenses.

Inexplicably, Indiana incinerated Boston with 44 fourth-period points after shooting only 34 percent while scoring a meager 35 points in the middle two periods.

What happened in the heartland on February 24th evoked memories of the Celtics' Christmas Day collapse at Madison Square Garden against the Knicks several years back.

However, it also underscored the fact that no team is invincible and that all the parts must mesh in precise fashion if

success is to be regularly achieved. One part out of sync can skew the entire mechanism.

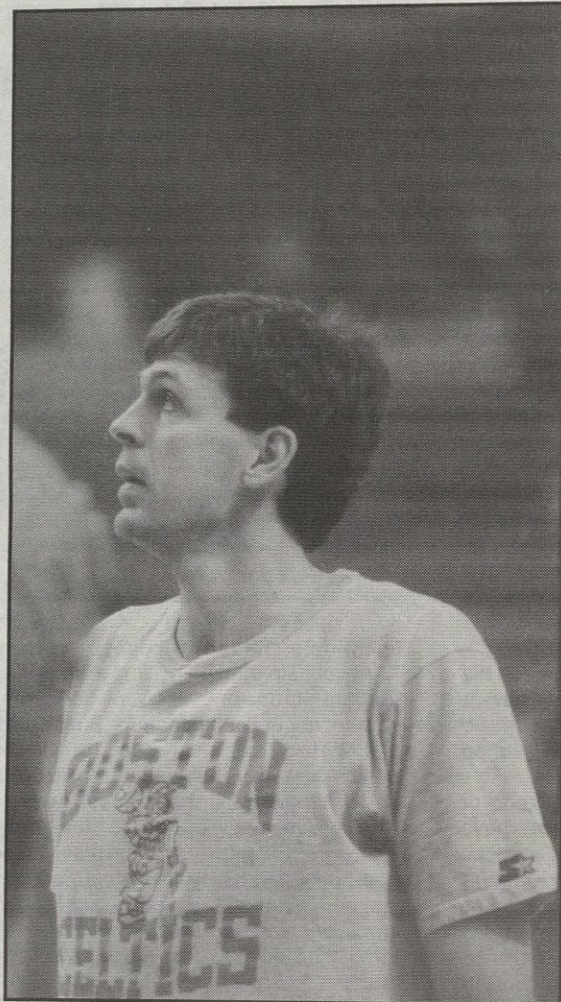
The Celtics were understandably distressed after that loss. Larry Bird went so far to label it as something which could have a long-term effect on team morale and confidence.

That may be overstating the case somewhat. Taken as a unit, the Celtics would do well to file those games under "Problems to Avoid" and refer to them when the play-offs roll around.

But they should also recall all the good that came out of the first four games of the trip.

Most importantly, they demonstrated the cohesiveness and wherewithal to win despite the prolonged absence of Kevin McHale, whose ankle problems appear more serious than originally thought. With Ed Pinckney capably filling that void, there was no need to rush McHale, whose gimpy limb will only benefit from the rest.

The Celtics also showed an ability to come from behind in a hostile environment (Seattle); to rein in a herd of frisky young colts (Golden State); and to dominate one of the league's elite teams



No need to rush Kevin.

(Lakers) in what had become a den of horrors in recent years. Don't think the rest of the league didn't get the message implicit in the results from that four-day stretch.

It is no accident the surge coincided with the return of Bird to the starting lineup, a subject this space touched on in the previous issue.

The ensuing three-game slide should be seen as nothing more than one of those glitches every team is bound to encounter during an interminably long season. Good teams such as the Celtics eventually work their way out of them.

Panic? No need. As the final week of February began, the Celtics' 40-14 mark remained second best in the NBA. They held a 10 1/2-game lead on second-place Philadelphia in the Atlantic Division and were heading home for a five-game homestand (yeah, I know — one was in Hartford).

Not a bad place to be — providing they keep their game faces on.

REMEMBERING A BYRD OF A DIFFERENT FEATHER. A dozen years after the Celtics made him their 10th-round pick in the 1979 draft, former Columbia standout Alton Byrd is considered the finest basketball player in England. He is the top guard for the English national team and for the country's top professional club, Kingston. He is generally credited with changing the look and style of the English game since his arrival 12 years ago. As a Columbia senior, Byrd averaged 15 points and eight points per game for a team that

defeated both St. John's and Final Four-bound Penn. He married an English woman, obtained dual citizenship in 1984 and has turned down well-paying offers to play throughout Europe. He averages 15 points and 11 assists per game and is described in the English press as the top "provider" in British basketball.

VISIONS OF OLYMPIC GOLD. The selection of Detroit head coach Chuck Daly to guide the 1992 Olympic basketball team should draw little argument from any quarter. Daly is a supreme motivator and his keen basketball sense will allow him to grasp the differences between the NBA and International games quickly. There is no way Daly will be out-coached as badly as John Thompson in 1988. Daly has said the team will likely consist of nine NBA players and three collegians. Two players who want a shot are Utah's Karl Malone and San Antonio's David Robinson. Malone was cut from the 1984 Olympic team while Robinson was a member of the 1988 club that settled for a bitter bronze medal. One who won't fly to Barcelona — Larry Bird, who cites age and health problems as reason enough not to go for the gold.

AND ANOTHER THING. At last look, the Houston Rockets were performing quite nicely without Akeem Olajuwon, compiling a tidy 14-10 mark in his absence. He was due to return to the line-up for a February 28 game against the L.A. Clippers... Sacramento Kings' back-up center Ralph ("I wanna' be a guard") Sampson, who's been limited to 13 minutes per game due to knee problems, says he's inspired by the return to all-star form of the Bullets' Bernard King... How's this for teamwork? Before Phoenix man-

agement signed Joe Barry Carroll, the Suns' players were allowed to interview the notoriously lazy Carroll about his work habits and what he could add to the team... Pistons' cast-off Michael Williams hit all eight field goals and all five free throws in the pacers 105-101 win against Detroit at The Palace... Drazen Petrovic averaged 15.9 ppg off the bench in his first 10 games for New Jersey after his acquisition from Portland... Vlade Divac had 18 points, 13 rebounds and six blocks in the Lakers' 120-106 win against Minnesota... When the Suns dumped the Lakers, 99-95, they halted two streaks — a 16-game L.A. winning binge and their own two and a half year famine of not having won when scoring under 100 points. Phoenix had gone 0-21, spanning 239 games... Orlando rookie Dennis Scott is fourth in the NBA in three-point shooting percentage — but is hitting at a meager .407 clip overall... The schizophrenic Miami Heat sandwiched a season-low 78-point performance against Cleveland between franchise record-setting outbursts of 134 points vs. New Jersey and 141 vs. Denver... Bullets' rookie A.J. English had a career-high 31 points and 10 assists while playing 48 minutes in a 108-104 victory against Cleveland on February 17... It figures that the Lakers are one of only two teams to defeat Portland twice this year. But Sacramento?

Kevin Doyal is the Sports Editor of the Newburyport Daily News, in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Kevin is regularly assigned to cover the Boston Celtics.

CELTICS PRIDE

Rarely Seen But Certainly Heard

"Ducky" Mead Plays An Important Role

By Jim Bianchine

He subtly blends into the crowd at the Providence Civic Center, the "Cage" at the University of Massachusetts, Silvio O. Conte Forum, and scores of other basketball arenas around New England.

Though he may rarely be seen, when it comes NBA draft time, the Boston Celtics New England area scout Donald "Ducky" Mead is certainly heard.

Scouts, like the CIA, are often faceless, quietly settling in between writers at a press table or find a lonesome perch high above court-side in a far away balcony. To the Celtics, their scouts are like Lewis and Clark.

Every organization has its behind-the-scenes guys contributing toward the success of the entire operation. Even the great Celtics machine can't run smoothly without all the smaller parts working.

The jovial Mead is a well-schooled basketball man with a keen basketball mind, sharp eye for talent and has an uncanny ability to spin a yarn or two from time to time.

The always amiable former coach is always being told to hit the road by the Celtics and obliges with pleasure. He has negotiated about every twist and turn in New England on his way to field houses to get a closer look at prospective draftees and evaluate their talent.

Mead, a Concord High product, was a basketball rival of the Celtics CEO Dave Gavitt, who starred at Peterborough. But his roots may have been planted in the most ideal place on the planet, Springfield College, not only the home of basketball, but the actual site of the Dr. James Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame for many years.

According to Mead, he picked the brains of the basketball coaches while a student pursuing his degree in Physical Education.

An educator of 32 years and counting, Mead began his high school coaching career in 1959 at the helm of the boys varsity squad at Sanborn Seminary in New Hampshire, marking the first of 17 years as a high school coach.

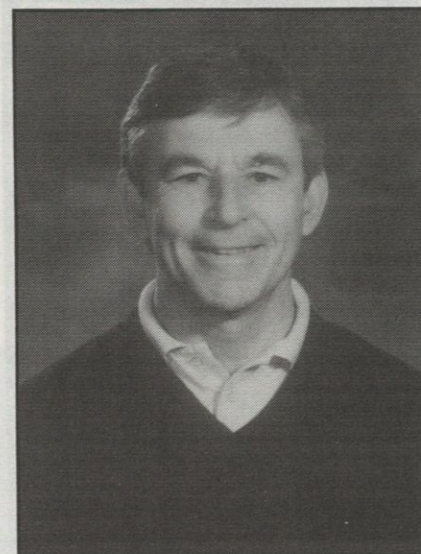
He would go on to three more schools, the last powerhouse Nashua High which thrived under his direction. His Nashua teams twice made it all the way to the Championship Final for the Granite State title.

His coaching resume includes 13 more years on the collegiate level as an assistant, nine of which were on the sidelines at St. Anselm.

Mead's elevation into the professional ranks came as a result of hard work, vast basketball knowledge and a style that impressed former Celtics player and coach, KC Jones.

"I met KC close to 30 years ago, working his basketball camps," said Mead. The camps began in upstate New York and over the years moved to their present site in Northfield, Vermont at Norwich University, where former Celtic guard Jerry Sichting has replaced Jones as the resident pro.

Now in his third year as part of the Celtics operation, Mead shares his New



Ducky Mead: A sharp eye for talent.

England duties with Rick Weitzman and wondrous John Keuster.

"Our major job is to go out and see college players and rate them on the basis of whether they are pro prospects or not. Can they play on the pro level?"

Sometimes that question is a very difficult one. You look at a kid and have to compare him to players in the league as well as players on the Boston Celtics," said Mead.

On this particular night Mead was sitting at court-side at the Boston College vs. Syracuse game at Conte Forum, feverishly scribbling notes on a pad in front of him.

He reached in his blazer and pulled a list out of his vest pocket with a ledger of names — Shaquille O'Neal, Eric Murdock, Dikembe Mutombo, Alonzo Mourning, Doug Smith, Stacey Augmon, Larry Johnson and more.

Early into the first half he began a file on Syracuse star Billy Owens, turned and said, "He's like a man among boys out there. The way he puts the ball on the floor, yet is strong inside, he reminds me of Utah's Karl Malone." Next to Owens name, he wrote, "a true pro prospect."

Earlier that day, another member of the Celtics team, John Keuster, traveled to Hartford to view the talent at the game between the University of Connecticut and North Carolina State.

"Scouting college players is very detailed work. All of a sudden it is spring and you have to know what level you are drafting from and what type player is available. Scouts have to cover all the bases. There are no shortcuts. You have to feel comfortable going into the draft," said Keuster.

The life of a scout doesn't always find them court-side at the glamor games watching sure-fire all-Americans like Billy Owens. They have to cover an awful lot of backroads among their many stops.

The former coach with the map of Ireland written on his face is always frank. "I guess you see a lot of worthless games too, just to see one player," he said, listing many of his lower profile games, among them trips to the University of New Hampshire or Holycross and peeks at Fairleigh Dickinson, Siena, Delaware, Bowling Green, Western Michigan and Monmouth when they trav-

eled to face New England teams.

"I see some awful games just to see some players. It's hard sometimes, but I love it," he said, breaking into a warm smile. Mead is a true professional whether he's watching Philadelphia Pharmacy or Final Four team. He gives the same attention to AIC against Bentley as to Providence vs. Pittsburgh. "I can watch games all night," he said.

He consulted his list once again. "Shaquille O'Neal is a franchise. But there are some real sleepers too," he said, pointing to the name Alex Blackwell, a tough 6-8 junior at Monmouth.

Everyone is looking at the stars like Owens. All the scouts are out there doing their job," he said. Sometimes a scout will get a jump on some players, and Mead was proud to say, "I was the first one to see Dee Brown. I saw him in Providence at the Fleet Classic. He just stuck out in my mind and I could see he was a player even in warmups," said Mead, noticing that certain something in the Celtics rookie guard.

"Of course by the end of the season, everyone knew all about him," he added. The evaluation process is far more in-depth than one might think. "You have to evaluate quickness and strength for the pro game. A kid could be a post-up player in college and a shooting guard in the pros," said Mead, using Owens as an example.

"You have to evaluate college centers who are likely to be power forwards in the pros like a Mutombo or Mourning," he said. "It is very venturesome to an organization to have someone like Ducky. He does an excellent job on the road scouting New England talent," said assistant coach Jon Jennings, who logs a lot of miles himself doing all the advance work scouting teams the Celtics are preparing to play.

"Red (Auerbach) makes a great point scout. You don't always go on what you saw last time. He might have had a bad game," said the Celtics scout. "You look for a lot of little things. A couple years ago I really loved Pervis Ellison out of Louisville. I thought he was a lot like Bill Russell in one area. He didn't just have an ability to block shots, but he blocked them to people. A lot of guys just block them out of bounds," he said.

Mead realizes you have to be aware of the total picture when evaluating a player's skill. "Another thing I liked about Ellison was his passing. He played with four shooters at Louisville and had to be a good passer," said Mead, who was assigned the Metro post-season tournament that season. Mead puts a lot of stock in players performances in the high-pressure situations. "A lot of decisions come down to post-season tournaments when they play against higher caliber players. I saw a lot in Dee (Brown) last season when I scouted him in the post-season tournament," he said.

Any scout will tell you there are players that can fool you, one way or the other. "A big surprise to me was Mitch Richmond," said Mead of the third-year Golden State guard who played at Kansas State. "I knew he was a good college player, but who

could have projected he was going to be the player he is in the pros.

On the other hand, all the scouts looked at (Tim) Hardaway (another Golden State guard). He is a tough, hard-nosed kid who does so many little things. Still, sometimes it is hard to tell how a player is going to do in the pros because play is so involved," he said.

"there are a number of categories you must evaluate them in. Is the kid tough and hard-nosed and will he have the durability to stand the professional schedule.

Dee Brown just went through a period where he said he wasn't burnt out, but was at a point where he was only halfway through the season and college would already have been done. They play about 35 games. There are just a whole lot of things like that to look at. But, the thing you can't measure, is heart," he said candidly.

"You can sit and juggle names all day," said Mead, again pulling out his list. He pointed to a name unfamiliar to most. "Vinnie Baker is a sophomore at the University at Hartford and has great potential," he said with a wink.

He pointed to another name on the list and said, "this one has great hand-eye coordination and great fakes before going up for his shot. There are a lot of little things a player can do to make a difference that the fan doesn't see. But Chris Ford does. Red does. Scouting players is really getting sophisticated," he said of the detailed oriented sheets kept on prospective players.

"Meetings prior to the draft are like cramming for an exam. You watch tape after tape and it really gets involved," he said.

He certainly remembers his very first Celtics meeting. "The first time I was sitting all alone on the end of this long, long table and everybody else was sitting on the other end. I couldn't understand it, but I was a rookie and thought I had better keep my mouth shut and not ask any questions.

Then all of a sudden Red appeared and he had this long green cigar sticking out of his mouth and everybody started coughing and sniffing and I realized why I was at that end of the table and everyone else was on the other end," he laughed.

The job of a scout can be viewed as thankless by some. They review hundreds of players and teams may only select two or three. Mead felt otherwise. "I absolutely love it. Just being in the company of Fordy Anderson (chief scout), Rick Weitzman, Dave Gavitt and Jan Volk is great. It's great because they all earned their way there. None of them are the gratus.

This year has been a little frustrating because there aren't that many (New England) kids to see. The first year I saw over 100 players. My second B.C., Northeastern, B.U., and trips to University of Vermont to look at a big kid named Kevin Robertson, but there just aren't that many prospects," he said. Still, he continues to file his reports and ships them off to the Celtics office for review.

Though a popular figure around the Boston Garden where he attends most Celtics home games, few know him by

Continued on page 24...

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He's Baaack!!

Larry Is Healthy And Ready For Stretch Run

By Jim Bianchine

He's back...Like Jason, Larry Bird is again terrorizing people too. His return to action is already sending shivers down the collective spines of NBA foes. After an extended absence, the party is over for teams that had the luxury of not having to contend with his wizardry.

The Boston Celtics had struggled through their first 14 games without Larry Bird as they prepared to circle their wagons and head West in what many believed would be an ambush along the dusty trail that would lead them from one coast to another.

Bird's status was uncertain and the Celtics were about to enter the badlands — very unfriendly territory for any Eastern Conference team.

So much for speculation. The Celtics, led by a seemingly rejuvenated Bird, went into every dusty town with both guns blazing and nearly won all five games on the West Coast trip.

They came up short (losing by four points) in the finale in Phoenix after impressive wins in Seattle, Golden State, Denver and the Jewel of the trip, a win in Los Angeles against the Lakers.

Bird heard the call to go West and the young man responded, and his influence and presence was very much in evidence, not only reflected in the team's record, but by their return to the same basketball when they won 29 of their first 36 games.

The team was in sync from the start in Seattle. "I thought the players focused in well and concentrated well out there (West Coast), except the Phoenix game," said Boston coach Chris Ford. "But it did not surprise me. I thought they got back to playing the type of basketball they were playing before Larry got hurt," he said.

Considering Bird, who was admittedly sore and received constant treatment for his aching back, was back and itching to play, the return of offensive flow shouldn't have come as much of a surprise to anyone. But, considering the Celtics lost Kevin McHale on the final play of the third period in the first game in Seattle, their 4-1 record might be.

Bird and the boys picked their games up a notch when McHale twisted his ankle and somehow remained in step without the star low-post player.

Bird adds so many dimensions on the court as well as inspiration and confidence that can't be measured in the box scores. The Celtics' offense had become somewhat lethargic in his absence, but they had enough low post strength to manage an 8-7 record in 15 games. But it was a far cry from what they had been accomplishing.

"I felt with Larry back the ball moved more freely. We weren't as stagnant on offense as we were when we had to more to the post-up game. We played well out there — better than people thought we would."

It was just a matter of the extra pass and Larry gave us another outside threat on offense," said Kevin Gamble, who, along with Robert Parish, benefits most by Bird's passing.

"With Larry back, I thought we had a lot of cohesiveness. We had a lot of togetherness on the defensive end especially. Plus he's a good rebounder. I thought we

played particularly well on the defensive end. We were really on top of our game with easy transition baskets on the trip. Larry beats you in a lot of different ways," said Ford.

He's playing the same way he did in the early and mid-80's," said Parish, quite a compliment to a three-time MVP with a sore back.

Bird showed his fierce pride throughout the trip, one which he honestly didn't know how much he would play. His obsession for excellence and winning showed through from the start of the long journey.

Against the Sonics, a team that had not lost in Seattle Coliseum since the first day in December, Bird's total effort was needed as the guys in green trailed three times by 13 points and faced an 88-80 deficit after three periods.

Bird, bad back and all, logged 42 minutes, scoring 18 points with 10 rebounds and his two free throws in the waning seconds iced a hard-fought 114-111 win.

After the game, Bird told the Associated Press, "I'm just trying to find my way back on the floor and get back in some kind of sync." Not a bad performance for someone out of rhythm, but Bird is most demanding when it comes to Larry Bird.

Prior to the game against Golden State where the Celtics were first without the services of McHale, but still looking to avenge a loss to the Warriors in the Boston Garden, Ford said, "we want him (Bird) to be our energizer."

He had to say no more. Bird seemingly took it upon himself to go out and score points and responded with 29, hitting 4-of-6 three-point shots and collected 11 rebounds. "Somebody had to score some more points and grab some more rebounds (without McHale)," said Bird, feeling he was simply doing his job and the performance was just another night at the office in the team's impressive 128-112 triumph.

Early in that game, hulking Jim Peterson landed on Bird's back as the two went crashing to the floor. Bird got up slowly and winced in pain, but it was obvious then, nothing was going to stop him from playing the next game against the arch-rival Lakers.

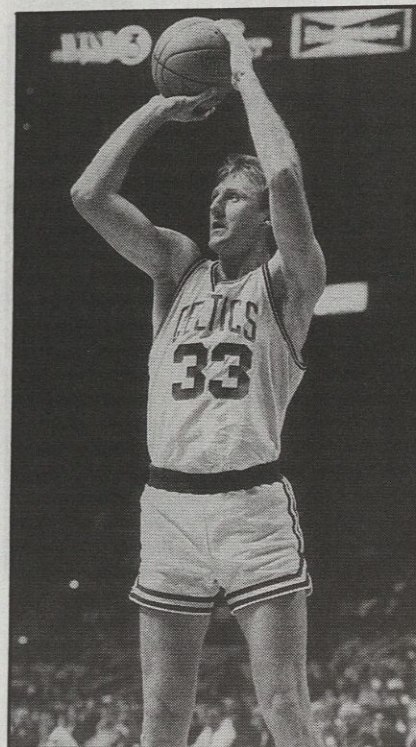
It was clear after his first back-to-back games since back troubles, he was going to play as much as the Celtics medical staff or his back would allow him to.

Prior to the Celtics' return home in a game against the Nets in the Hartford Civic Center, Bird reflected on that stage of his recently concluded trip. "I was surprised I was able to play back-to-back games then. But the back held up," he said as he laced his sneakers to do battle with New Jersey.

There was no hiding the fact that he experienced a degree of stiffness and soreness throughout, but was quite clear about his intentions to face the Lakers. "I'd have sat out all the others if I had to, to play against the Lakers. That's the one I wanted to play," he said candidly.

After logging 79 minutes in the first two games, Bird and company set out to avenge an embarrassing loss to the Lakers at home on Super Sunday. It did come easy as the Lakers were riding the crest of winning 17 of their previous 18 and were eagerly awaiting the Celtics in hopes of a sweep of the series.

The number 33 was in evidence in the stats as he totaled 11 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists. His passing, espe-



Bird is the heart of this team.

cially to Robert Parish in the first period, keyed the win. Bird continually found Parish for open shots, and the Chief responded with 21 first period points, paving the way to the Celtic first win in the Forum in five years and one of their most impressive victories of the season.

Bird logged another 40 minutes signaling he was back and so was the skill of basketball the Celtics hope can carry them to their 17th World Championship.

"With Larry being such a great passer and rebounder, me, Kevin Gamble, Brian Shaw could just take off again," said Reggie Lewis of the return of the running game.

"Without him we had to stay back and help rebound. Now with Larry and Robert getting the rebounds, we can just get out and go," said Lewis as the return of Bird meant the return of the transition game and translates into winning.

The Celtics stormed Denver, a place that has not been kind over the years, and soundly beat the Nuggets, 126-108. Bird got the Celtics going early, calling it a day with just under four minutes remaining in the third period. It also paved the way to play 44 yard minutes in Phoenix.

That game saw him frolicking. He was scoring on one-hand scoops and delivering flip passes over his head and behind-the-back and it was clear to see the Celtics were having fun again as they won their seventh straight game. The importance of this win, more than anything else, was they didn't fall prey to a let down against Denver after their huge win in the Forum.

Reflecting on the West Coast swing, Bird said, "I thought we played well overall. We had our ups and downs, but we did the things we had to, to win. I think I was very lucky. I don't think I was as good as I'd like to be as far as shape-wise. I just had to work my way back into it," said Bird.

Anyone who knows Bird, knows he has only one approach. "I tried to play hard. I felt in the Phoenix game I didn't play as hard as I could have because physically I was just worn out," admitted Bird, who

wasn't making any excuses for his tough night. He managed just 5-of-23 shots from the floor and the Suns avenged a 132-103 blowout in Boston.

In that loss, Bird, the master at miracles, showed his human side, missing two crucial three-point attempts in the final minute of the bitterly fought contest. Prior to the only loss of the highly successful trip, Bird averaged 20.5 points, 10 rebounds and a half-dozen assists. But, more importantly his presence seemed to restore the team's early season confidence and gave birth to a Celtics resurgence.

"I just feel good tonight for some reason, and hopefully it will get me over the hump for future games," said Bird prior to the Celtics 111-99 win over the Nets in their "home away from home" in Connecticut.

He knew physically he was better for resting his back for 15 games, but felt the team benefited in certain ways without him. "Everybody got a little bit more time without me. Some guys got more confidence (as a result)," he said.

Bird wasn't sure, then, just how much he would play, but feels "pretty good now." The Celtics wouldn't have been overly surprised to see their captain miss some games on the recently concluded trip.

"I was just playing day-to-day. I worried about the next day, the next game. My sense of the game came out on the trip and I knew what it took for us to beat that many teams. I thought the guys responded very well," said Bird, who played a large part in orchestrating the successfully road symphony.

"I thought Robert had the best West Coast trip. I just hope it carries on," said Bird. It did. Parish led the Celtics past the stubborn Nets with 26 points and 17 rebounds.

When the Celtics are having fun, it spells trouble for the rest of the league. "When you win, you have a lot of fun. We did a good job putting points on the board and played good defense. It was our style," said Bird, which was the key to the successful trip that many players felt would be a measuring stick at that point in the season. On the West Coast trip everyone was really focused. Larry's presence really added something to the team. "He makes a big difference," said Brian Shaw.

Again his pride lent credence to the adage "you can't keep a good man down," though he was down plenty when he stretched out his stomach viewing the game from the floor in front of the bench.

Bird's return did far more than produce four impressive road wins. It marked a return of crisp ball movement, tough defense, smooth offense flow and the rebirth of a running game that had been temporarily put on hold.

It also lifted the weight of winning off the shoulders of others. But unlike the recent past, it is no longer squarely on him, either, as he continued to be the bridge linking the old and the new in the Celtics family along with McHale and Parish.

Last November Bird passed two career milestones, dishing out his 5,000th assist and surpassing the 20,000 point plateau. But he is not concerned with personal achievement as he nears George Gervin, who is the 14th all-time leading scorer. Winning is his only goal.

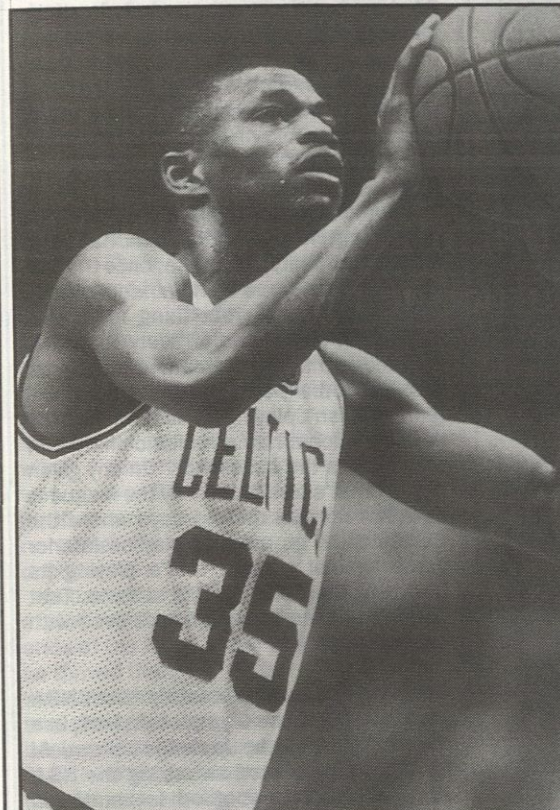
Forget the bad back. Just pass the word. Larry is back and the Celtics are back on their path of destructions.

Carrying On The Celtic Excellence

Reggie Lewis Has Reached The Plateau Of Superstar

By Bob Schron

In the late morning, emerging from practice dressed in a brightly colored red and blue Reebok sweatshirt, the Celtics' brilliant young guard, Reggie Lewis has all the air of an emerging superstar, if he isn't at this plateau now. With all the constant need for players to "step up" and meet the responsibility of carrying the important mantle of Celtic excellence, the man the team has been predicting



Lewis: "A lot depends on our running game, I've got to keep running the lanes."

stardom for very likely is already at this level.

"Reggie Lewis is an NBA All Star," teammate Eddie Pinckney declared flatly. "To be a player in that category, a player has to have both skill and the intangibles. Reggie can do everything — score, defend, rebound — and he's fearless. He takes — and hits — big baskets."

"This isn't even to begin talking about his amazing first step (meaning Lewis's first step on offense when driving against a defender); Dee Brown and I were watching from the bench when we were playing in Phoenix in the last game of our road trip. Dan Majerle was defending Reggie, and Majerle was giving Reggie plenty of room. And yet — Reggie just gave him a quick move and went right by Majerle. Dee and I were amazed."

Lewis, basking in the sudden winter thaw in New England, is told this and laughs. Humility doesn't accurately characterize Lewis, though he is hardly braggadocio. Rather, Reggie Lewis, in his fourth season with the team, is a winner on the court, but, importantly, off the court, too, because of his essential honesty. Lewis of course went to the mat with the team in the

early days of the Dave Gavitt regime here regarding salary negotiations, because it was something he saw clearly, already more clearly than anyone. He was a star-in-becoming, and it was the time to gain comparable compensation, even as the market is inflated in these depressed economic times. He was being accurate in his assessment, because now as the happy winning season of the team rolls on towards the play-offs. (The Celtics were 33-13 after their February 12-20 western trip). Lewis is a critical figure, averaging 18.6 ppg on .483 FG% with 5 rebounds per game and 63 steals and 50 blocks. But as always, statistics don't really matter in Boston when times are good. The reason Lewis has won the respect of teammates and opponents alike (Charles Barkley has declared Lewis an All Star as well) is because Lewis has disciplined his great talent to team play.

"We struggled so much when Larry Bird was out," Lewis says now, "not because of his scoring, but because of his passing. We play well when we're moving the ball around on offense and helping each other out defensively. The reason we did as well as we did early and then again on the western trip is because each night another player stepped up and did the job. Having Larry back on the floor is like having another point guard out there."

"I thought he'd be a very good college player when I first saw him at Northeastern." Dave Gavitt is talking about Lewis now, moments after the Celtics have finished working out at Hellenic College. Gavitt increasingly has become hands-on at practice, much as Red Auerbach would do several years ago. He has just pulled Brown aside (gently) and pointed out some subtleties on proper positioning defensively.

"I saw Reggie at Northeastern but I wasn't at that time assessing NBA players, though I know at the time Jim Calhoun (then NU coach, now at UConn) had made a steal, recruiting him."

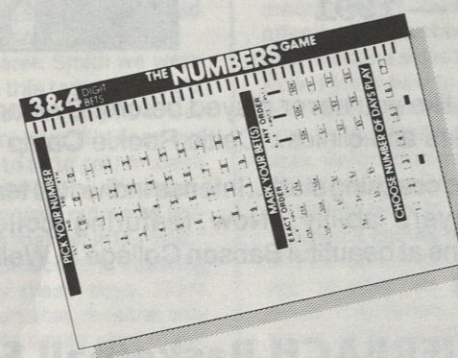
"Reggie's tough" Gavitt goes on, utilizing 'tough' in this context as a form of ultimate court respect. "I saw it last summer at our rookie camp — that quick first step! But he has the potential to be one of the best players in the game: he's improved his consistency on his outside shooting (FT shooting, formerly a problem, now is not any longer: .853) and he's become better defensively."

He's closed the gap a lot on what he needs to be to be at that level. What he needs more work on is his passing — on the pick and roll, against a double team. Once he masters that..."

Gavitt is then asked if Lewis, quiet still though more verbal, has the leadership quality to help bring the Celtics titles in the late Nineties. "Oh, I believe so," Gavitt says. "It's a different type of leadership skill. Robert Parish is a different kind of personality than a Larry Bird or a Kevin

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Man To Man

Rick Barry Always Speaks His Mind

By Andy Murphy

He spent 10 years in the NBA, sandwiched around four in the ABA, as a perennial all-star and one of the most prolific scorers in NBA history, retiring with a 23.2 ppg average.

In 1974-75 he led the Golden State Warriors to the franchise's only NBA title. And now, he's on the air as a color commentator for TNT. Celtics Pride spends some time with Rick Barry.

CELTICS PRIDE: What's your assessment of the Celtics so far?

RICK BARRY: A lot of people are surprised by the Celtics, but personally at the start of the season I picked them to win the Atlantic Division. I thought that as long as they were healthy, they'd be a team that the other teams in the division would have to be concerned with.

Obviously, when they were healthy earlier in the year, they showed that they're a team that's even more than that.

But the Celtics have to keep their three big guys healthy. Larry's back injury and Kevin's ankle shows how important it is to keep those three guys healthy. Without

one of them, their chances of getting back into the finals are greatly diminished.

CP: But as far as winning the division goes, if you're going to be injured, it's best to be in the Atlantic.

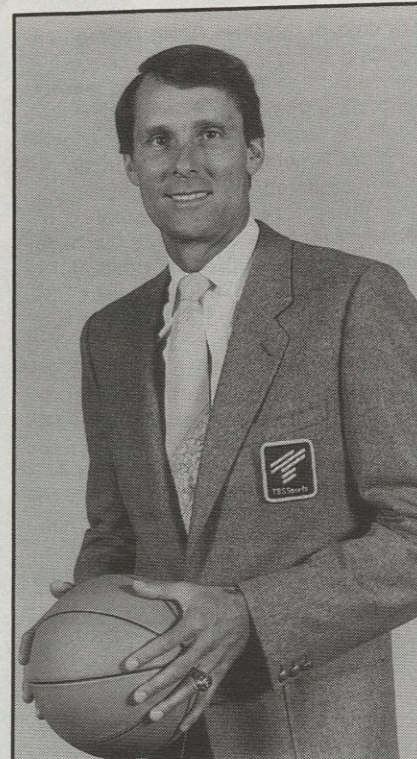
RB: That division is having problems. With Johnny Dawkins out, Philadelphia is really hurting. New York is in incredible turmoil, and Washington is still struggling. There really isn't a whole lot of competition in the Atlantic, but still you have to give the Celtics credit for taking advantage of the division and producing one of the best records in the Eastern Conference.

CP: Do the Celtics have enough depth to get back to the finals?

RB: If they get Larry and Kevin back healthy and working with some of the young kids - Dee Brown, Reggie Lewis, Brian Shaw, they have a nice combination of experience and youth. And who would have thought Kevin Gamble would be as consistent as he is?

I don't think the Celtics are overly thrilled about some of the other people they have, but when it comes to play-off time, how many people do you really need? All you need is seven or eight guys, and they have that.

CP: They also might have Derek Smith.



Rick says injuries will be the key.

What does he bring to the Celtics?

RB: If he can come back healthy and work into the system, he could be a big plus for them. He gives them another player with experience, which is invaluable come play-off time.

How well is he going to play? Who knows? You don't know how the injury will effect him or how the layoff will effect him. But the thing is, he's a bonus. It's not like they have to have him. Even if they don't get him back, they still have enough people to possibly get to the finals.

CP: When you look at the Celtics' injury situation, and the problems Detroit is having without Isiah Thomas, would you say the Bulls have the inside track at this point?

RB: No question about it. The Bulls have to be favored right now.

CP: It would seem the Bulls' downfall might come from all of the bickering they do among one another.

RB: Remember the Yankees? The old Knicks didn't love each other. If you can put away the problems you have off the court and play the game the way it's supposed to be played, that's all that matters. You don't have to like each other.

CP: Is this year's NBA champion coming out of the West?

RB: If Portland made it, you'd have a team with more depth and firepower than anything the East could put out there. The Lakers would be another team that could get the job done.

But when you get down to a seven game series, who knows? Who knows what the injury situation is going to be, or who's playing the best basketball? That's the neat thing about basketball - you don't know. You always expect the unexpected, because anything can happen. The whole idea is just to get there.

CP: There has been a lot of trading activity in the West. Has any of it significantly altered the balance of power?

RB: Some moves were made out there, but I don't think they're anything of major significance, other than if Benoit Benjamin decides to play, then Seattle could cause some problems because they have a lot of talent. They could be a team that people are afraid of come play-off time.

CP: In years past you could almost predict which two teams were going to be in the finals before the season even began. This season seems to be a lot more wide open.

RB: Yes, but if you were to exclude all the injuries, it's still a situation where the Pistons are probably the elite team in the East, and certainly Portland is the best team in the West. Then there are a ton of teams that would have the opportunity to get there should either of those teams falter.

So without the injury situation, the league was getting close to what the NFL had been striving for - parity. Of course, once the NFL got parity, everyone complained about it. But I think it's a great thing for sports because it gives fans of every team the knowledge that if their team is playing its best basketball, and it's going against a team that isn't playing its best basketball, then their team has a realistic chance of winning. It's the old cliché: "On any given day..." That's true of the way the league is now. It's not like the old days where the Celtics could go out and play an inferior game against a team that's playing its best, and the Celtics would still win. That doesn't happen any more, not even with expansion teams.

CP: A lot has been said lately about NBA stars playing in the Olympics. In fact, in a recent SI article by Jack McCallum, Al McGuire was quoted as saying the NBA stars couldn't beat good international teams.

What do you think?
RB: I don't know what Al McGuire has been drinking or smoking, but he's got to be out of his mind. I mean, who's he kidding? I couldn't believe that when I read it. It's one of the most ridiculous statements I've ever heard in my life.

I don't even think the pros should be playing. As a youngster, going to the Olympics was a big goal of mine, and I never fulfilled it. It's still my biggest disappointment in basketball. I think if we could make some condition where the players who commit early to be pros could still try out, then there's no way we could lose.

Even then, the last time was a fluke. They should have won the last one, but they didn't have the right kind of team to play international basketball. There weren't enough shooters and they were playing zone when they should have been playing man-to-man.

The bad thing is, the last time out, our amateurs beat the Ivory Coast by 63 points and at most they play two games that have any significance whatsoever. What happens when the pros go out there? It would be a travesty.

Until the other countries prove they can beat us on a regular basis, we should send our amateurs.

Derek Smith Has Learned A Lot — The Hard Way

Both Off The Court And On

By Mike Spellman

Derek Smith can still remember almost every detail from that night nearly five and a half years ago when life as he knew it changed for all time.

"We were playing the Sonics. It was late in the fourth quarter and I already had 33 points. I had driven down the left side of the paint and as I planned to get ready to explode into Tom Chambers face, POW — what exploded was my left knee. That was November 13th, 1985 — just the 11th game of the season."

Smith, then a member of the Los Angeles Clippers, had just begun his fourth year of NBA service as one of the league's most promising up and coming stars. After reasonably respectable rookie and sophomore campaigns, the former Louisville star and 2nd round draft pick (35th overall) of the Golden State Warriors had burst into prominence in his third pro season, averaging 22.1 points and 5.3 rebounds per game and shooting nearly 54 percent from the field, while seeing time at three positions — both forward spots and shooting guard.

The next season, he picked right up where he left off in his development. He was up over 23 points per game through the first ten contests and was converting on better than 55 percent of his shot opportunities.

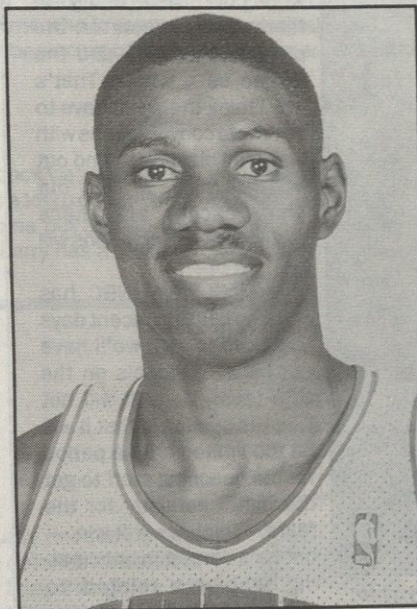
In the Fall of 1985, Derek Smith was an explosive, often unstoppable force at both ends of the floor. At 6-6 and 220 pounds, he thrived thanks to an awesome blend of speed, quickness, athleticism, raw strength and sheer determination. His future as a basketball player appeared unlimited. Away from the court, he was an affable, thoroughly likeable, and admittedly naive 24-year old. Then POW...Faded out.

Fade back in... February 21, 1991. The Hellenic College gymnasium and locker room are now empty, all of the active players on the Celtics roster having long since departed. What would be near perfect silence is being steadily broken by a single series of low groans, grunts and gasps emanating from the fitness center located on the balcony above the playing floor. Derek Smith is still at it.

Under the watchful eye of the Celtics' erstwhile trainer, Ed Lacerte, Smith is closing in on the completion of his standard six hour per day rehab regimen with one final set of leg curls, an all too typical scene during the last five years.

These days, Smith is working hard in the hopes that he'll soon be able to complete a comeback from the fourth operation on his left knee since that fateful night in 1985. This latest surgical procedure, in early September, was performed to remove scar tissue. Needless to say, his career never evolved as had been envisioned in 1985.

"I hope the people who hear this won't think I'm arrogant," begins Smith hesitantly, "but I just don't think that there are many athletes around who could have gone through what I have with injuries and still be out there giving 100 percent trying to get back and still hoping for the maximum



Derek sees a difference in Boston.

return on their hard work. I really believe that I've mastered the art of facing adversity."

Undeniably, over the course of the last half decade, Derek Smith has had to overcome more than his fair share of hard knocks. Along the way, he's learned a lot about life both on and off the court. As a basketball player, he's become an extremely adept at adjusting his game so as to remain effective through varying levels of physical capability. Away from the hardwood, however, he's been taught a lesson he now considers even more important to his survival.

"I've learned a lot about human nature in the last few years and what professional sports is really all about," Smith confides. "There really aren't too many people in this industry that truly care about the athletes themselves. When I was healthy and rolling along, people couldn't do enough for me. When I went down with a serious injury, though, I saw how really phony just about all of these people were."

"I have seen a difference since I came to Boston, though," he admits. "But I'm not really surprised. They've got a class operation here and a big part of the reason for that is that they know how to treat people."

"To be honest, though, I think that a lot of what's happened with me in the last two months has to do with the fact that they've already got a great team here. I think they're hoping I can play, but they've got the convenience of being able to be patient with me."

There are a lot of things you can probably read into this candid assessment of the Celtics' position. However, if you're leaping towards the same conclusion this scribe started to draw at about this time, guess again.

"Of course I think I can contribute to this team," responded the ninth year man to the ill-begotten query somewhat incredulously. "I honestly feel that I could step in and make a meaningful contribution to any team on this planet. I've got complete confidence in my abilities and my competitiveness, and in the fact that I will outwork anyone when I have to. It's just

that I'm smart enough to know that if I left here tomorrow, it wouldn't take people long to forget all about Derek Smith."

"Sorry I asked."

"No problem," he reassured, breaking into a comforting grin.

If there is a single thought that fans in these parts will associate with Derek Smith's first two months as a member of the Boston Celtics, undoubtedly, it will be the phrase "no pressure"

Since officially becoming a member of the NBA's best known and most successful franchise on December 21, and being immediately placed on the IL, the only real news we've heard where Smith is concerned is that there would be no timetable placed on his recovery, and that there would be absolutely "no pressure" placed on him to make his debut.

"We've deliberately tried not to put a timetable on Derek's recovery, because, for a number of reasons, we feel this is the best approach for everyone concerned," explains Head of Operations Dave Gavitt, who has sort of become the unofficial spokesman for all injured Celtic players in recent months. "Everything we've seen so far from him has been very encouraging. He's working extremely hard and coming along quite nicely, but we're still not prepared to set a date for when he might start practicing or playing."

By now, every Celtics fan from Bangor to Bridgeport knows that the braintrust's plan is to give the 6-6 swingman all the time he needs to get healthy and to weed out all of the bad habits he developed to compensate for the fact that his knee has not been physically sound for so long.

"If we can ever get Derek back to where he was before his original knee injury then we're going to have ourselves one heck of a ballplayer," offers Gavitt. "He played the last two years in Philadelphia on a knee that was clearly giving him a lot of problems. As a result, he developed a lot of bad habits just to get by and, actually, he pulled it off very well considering."

"If that were the Derek Smith we were trying to get to play on this team than we'd probably be ready to let him play now. But from Day 1 since he got here, it's been our goal and Derek's goal to try to get him back to where he was in 1985. So, of course, that's going to take longer, but we're betting it will be well worth the wait in the end."

Even though the Celtics are coasting along quite smoothly these days, there seem a number of sensible reasons why those calling the shots would want to get Smith into the line-up in time to work himself into decent game condition before the post-season begins. By now, anyone whose been paying attention to the Celtics this season is more than likely sick of hearing about how this team is a player or two away from legitimate championship contention, with the consensus being that they could really use a defensive-minded small forward and more experience in the backcourt.

Ostensibly, Smith could fill both roles. So, don't think for a moment that the first year CEO is as cool waiting this out as he's trying to project.

"Our mix and our chemistry is good right now," asserts Gavitt. "However, I still think

that Derek can provide some things we don't really have in our other players. Sure, he's approximately the same size and a similar type of athlete as Reggie (Lewis) and Oscar (Kevin Gamble), but, physically, he's a lot stronger than they both are. So, that alone could help when it comes to some of the defensive match-ups we've traditionally had some problems with."

"His game sort of reminds me of Dan Majerle's (the Phoenix Suns' relentless 6-6 swingman). Like Majerle, I think Derek has that ability to come into a game and ignite his team and really pick things up. I'm hoping that that's what he'll have an opportunity to do for us."

Despite his previous comments, Smith says he is well aware that there are those who are viewing him as that all-important missing piece of the puzzle. As one might well imagine, this is exactly the type of added pressure just about anyone who is recovering from major surgery might prefer to do without. In his case, however, Smith would have us believing that just the opposite is true.

"I honestly like the challenge of having to impress my coaches, teammates and the fans. I guess a lot of that has to do with my own confidence. If I'm healthy, I know I'll be able to deliver."

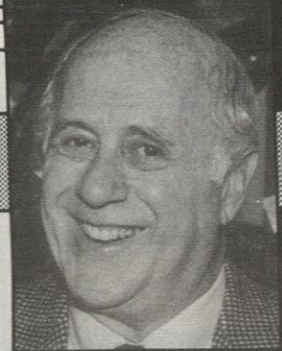
Oh yeah, as long as we're on the subject of your health...

"The knee is coming along really well right now, in fact it's better than I ever thought it would be at this point," he said. "It's been a lot of work, but it's been worth it, because it's responding so well. I've had no real setbacks and everything has basically been in one direction since I started my rehab. The knee and the whole leg is continuing to get stronger and stronger."

"I don't think that I'll ever get back to that 'explosive' level, where I used to fire into the basket and either go over defenders or barrel through them, but that doesn't mean I don't think I can't be just as effective as I was back then. I've developed a lot of useful skills I didn't have back then. Now, I know how to slash a little bit more, how to take advantage of picks better and how to generally put my intelligence to work. Before my injury, my game was about 90 percent raw physical force. Now, I'm caught up more in trying to outwit people."

When it comes right down to it, Smith is still no more sure than he was two months ago of what his future with the Celtics might hold when, and if, he is declared ready for action. If nothing else, however, he does seem pretty willing to accept whatever might be asked of him, especially in light of what he could stand to gain.

"I'm smart enough to know that I'm on a team with three guys who are headed for the Hall of Fame — Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish — and who are still going strong, as well as with some really talented younger players like Reggie Lewis, Brian Shaw and Dee Brown. I realize that the best way for me to fit in on this team is to go out there and do the dirty work and play as hard as I can. And if I can be a contributor on a Championship team than, hey, that will have made a lot of what I've had to go through just to get here worthwhile."



By Red Auerbach

Red On Roundball

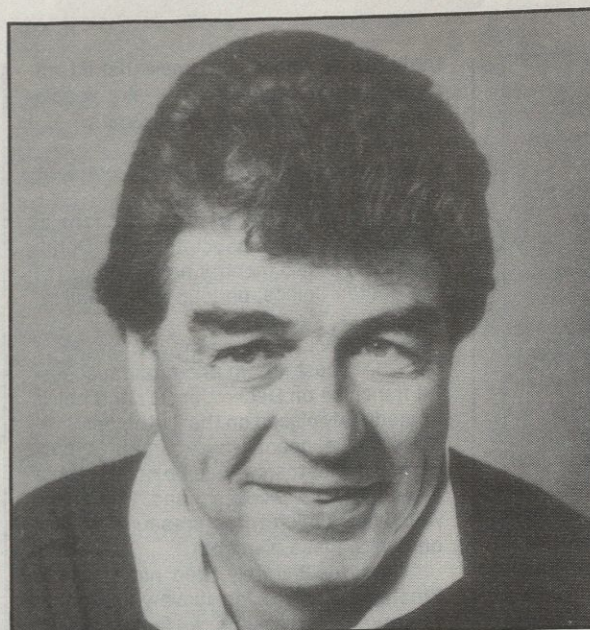
The Olympic Situation Is Complex

I thought the Olympic Committee, a group which our senior vice-president Dave Gavitt is very involved in, made a solid choice last week in selecting Chuck Daly, coach of the Pistons, as our Olympic coach in 1992.

I have a great deal of respect for Daly. I've written of him before, during the play-offs last season. I believe it takes a great deal to motivate players at this level, particularly to win a championship, and then to come back and win it again. I heard an interview with Daly last week and what he said about winning in the modern era is factual: in order to win, it required total commitment. In order to win, a team must sacrifice their individual goals and must commit mind, body and spirit toward that championship goal. This is all very Spartan, but very real, too. This is how competitive the National Basketball Association is right now.

I believe the Olympic Committee and the country has made essentially a correct choice in allowing NBA players to compete in the Olympics in Barcelona. In acknowledging the excellence of the game at the professional level in the States, you must look at the game worldwide as well. As also noted here before, the game of basketball has taken off internationally. Very strong in Italy, Czechoslovakia, Greece, for example. We were defeated in the Olympics in 1988 in Seoul and we have lost more frequently with our amateurs in the past fifteen years. It's time now to play our best players in the Olympic Games. And yet, there are some problems that must be worked out, having to do with selection, practices, competition, and now the selection process will affect the individuals and teams in the league.

Selection. Sports Illustrated featured a "dream team" on the cover of its February



Chuck Daly was a solid choice for coach of the Olympic team.

18th issue; they speculate that a potentially unbeatable starting five would be Magic Johnson, Charles Barkley, Patrick Ewing, Karl Malone and Michael Jordan. I have no argument with the potential greatness of such a team, and yet, the progression from deciding who is to finally play and how the team shapes up is an imperfect process.

My points are these: What is the proper way for the committee to choose the players from the NBA? I agree that there should be eight or nine NBA players on the squad. But I think that there will have to be a considerable amount of behind-the-scenes talking with players. First, because what happens in a situation if there are tryouts for these guys? I can't conceive that players who are making \$2-2.5 million a season will try out for a team. And what would happen if there were tryouts, and some of

these professional players were cut? There could be far-reaching effects on the player themselves and the league as a whole. That's why I think there will have to be private conversations with potential players; to find out who will play, to find out what coaches and these performers' expectations will be.

Al McGuire of NBC has insisted loudly in recent days that even though we'll have our best individuals on the USA team, we still will not win. His opinion is that it will be too limited a time period for our coaching staff to get the right chemistry for the team. I think we will win — but he's correct in anticipating problems related to chemistry. I think the players (for example, the indi-

viduals featured in the Sports Illustrated feature) can and will make the necessary adjustments in order to succeed. But I also think that there will have to be a lot of thought needed to smooth out potential difficulties.

PRACTICES. There will be some questions here. Related to injury, how will the players from the league be insured? For example, we have just had the situation recently where one of our great players, Isiah Thomas, went out for nearly an entire season with a serious wrist injury. Daly has to consider two-day drills — needless to say, this will be a demanding regimen for our players accumulating stress after a long NBA season, and heading into a new one. Teams like the Pistons and Lakers and Bulls are going to be wary for financial and athletic reasons of their players going out and working their tails off for the

Olympics. It will scare these teams. Consider the example of Magic, who probably is the best backcourt player of all time. In 1992, he'll be 34, 35 years old. At age 34, you don't heal as quickly as you do when you're 25. In his mid-twenties, if a player pulls a hamstring or groin, he can come back in a week. But at age 34, it's a totally different situation. If the injury is severe enough, it can take up to five months. We haven't any clearer example than in Boston as our fans well know; Larry Bird at one time probably played right through his back injury. But last month, we had to sit him down for a month. It's just a fact of life and it's something that will have to be worked out.

THE TEAM. McGuire makes one claim but based on my experience, I know we can complete a team which could both be talented individually and play as a team. Few recall history, but in 1964, we put together one of the greatest all-star teams of all time and played a tour of Eastern Europe; Guards: Bob Cousy, Oscar Robertson, KC Jones and Tom Gola. Forwards: Tom Heinsohn, Bob Pettit and Jerry Lucas. Center: Bill Russell.

People thought these guys couldn't play together but we won every game by over 35 points.

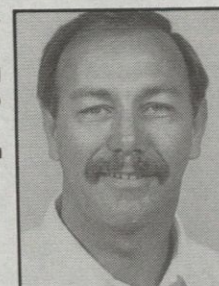
THE FUTURE. I concur with the decision to send our best and I see it as something of a continuation of what our commissioner, David Stern, is doing in professional basketball. Not only is David Stern sharp, very sharp in marketing, but he knows the game, too. Maybe he'd consider this idea, something I think will eventually happen, maybe not in my lifetime. A totally international NBA, with a European Division, for example, consisting of Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Russia and Spain. Each of these division's teams would make a trip to the States and play the current NBA teams twice, and then the trips would be reciprocated by our teams. With advancements in jet travel (we're seeing some of the effect of technology now as more teams are beginning to charter in the NBA with positive effects on their play), including the Concorde, this can work out in the future. With the Concorde, it's as quick to jet from Chicago to Italy as it is from Boston to the West Coast.

Perspective

What do you feel is the biggest difference with the team since Larry Bird's return?

The Celtics were 8-7 during Larry Bird's 15 game absence. They are 5-1 since his return and 31-8 overall this season with him in the lineup. As almost anyone who knows anything at all about the Celtics will be only too glad to tell you, however, the margin between wins and losses is only the beginning of the story, as far as the differences go when the franchise forward is around.

CHRIS FORD. I do know that since Larry came back we're definitely playing better as a team, and I'm sure Larry has a lot to do with that. But, at the same time, the other guys have come out and worked real hard in the last few weeks. Undoubtedly, Larry has a lot to do with our success, but it's not all him.



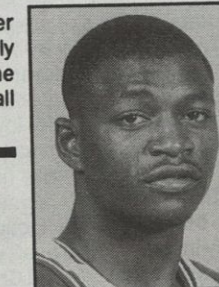
Chris Ford

DAVE GAVITT. Where do you want to start? Larry does everything out there—he rebounds, he passes, plays team defense and shoots with the best of them. Probably the bottom line, though, is the incredible confidence he brings to a game that becomes instantly infectious.



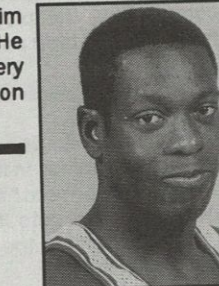
Dave Gavitt

REGGIE LEWIS. The biggest thing I notice now is how much better the ball is moving. By having a passer out there like Larry, it really makes things easier for the rest of us to get out there and run the fast break and get to the open spot knowing we could get the ball at any time. That really makes us a much better team.



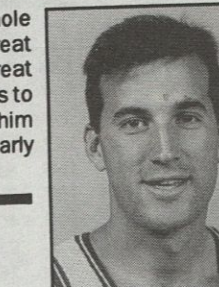
Reggie Lewis

ED PINCKNEY. The overall confidence that Larry brings with him has been the biggest difference. He just oozes with confidence. He brings that plus great intensity and a real winning attitude every time he steps onto the court. That has a real positive affect on everyone who is on his team.

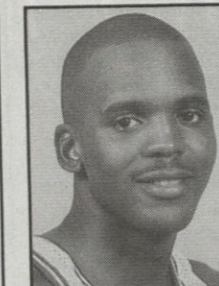


Ed Pinckney

MIKE SMITH. His presence alone adds so much to our whole offense and particularly the running game. He's such a threat everywhere on the floor when he's got the ball, because of his great passing ability and obviously his shooting too. The opponent has to constantly worry about him and that makes the players around him so much more affective. The added dimensions he brings clearly makes everyone better.

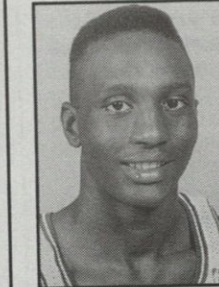


Mike Smith



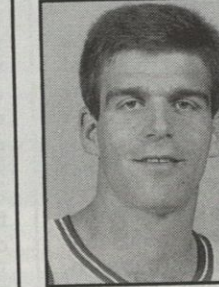
Kevin Gamble

KEVIN GAMBLE. The ball is moving so much better now. The offense had definitely stagnated some with Larry out. We weren't running that well and we were going a lot to post-ups. So we were relying a little too much on Kevin (McHale) and Robert (Parish) to carry us. Now, with the ball moving, it's a lot easier for everyone to get involved, which makes things easier for all of us.



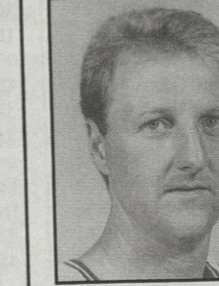
Dee Brown

DEE BROWN. Everything is better with Larry out there. He just does so much for the team at both ends of the floor. He can rebound, pass and shoot as well as anyone. With him back, the whole court has been spread out a little bit more because he's finding the open man or trailing the break and hitting the open shot or the killer 3-pointer. This makes things almost impossible for defenses a lot of times.



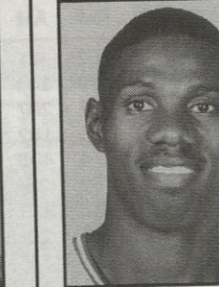
Joe Kleine

JOE KLEINE. He brings so much that our whole mental preparation is better when he's around. I think, as a team, we're just more focussed and better ready to play when he's a part of things.



Larry Bird

LARRY BIRD. I think this year so far I've just been in the right place at the right time. When I went out with the back injury the team as a whole wasn't playing well anyway, and they lost some games. Now, the teams playing well again. It's not just me that's making a difference.



Derek Smith

DEREK SMITH. What sets Larry apart is the crazy confidence he has in his game. When you've got a guy on your team that has this type of incredible confidence then it can't help but to rub off on the other guys who maybe aren't so sure of themselves or confident in their abilities. In the end, everyone benefits from having a guy like Larry around.

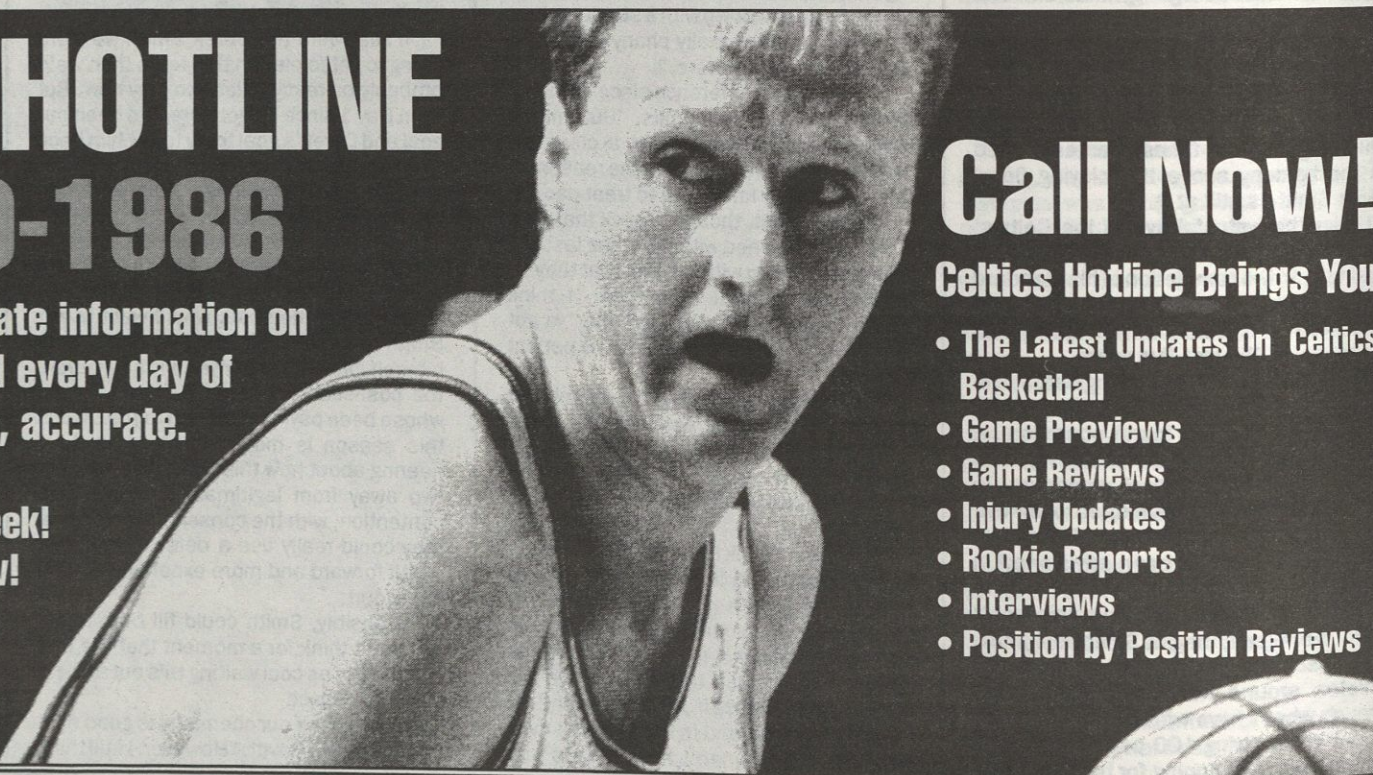
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Innerview

Jon Jennings Is The Youngest Assistant Coach In The NBA

By Bob Schron

The Celtics' assistant coach, Jon Jennings, at twenty-seven years of age, is the youngest assistant in the NBA. Yet, within his nine year career in coaching and scouting, his resumé is also one of the most impressive in basketball as well: He's worked under Bobby Knight at Indiana University, George Irvine of the Indiana Pacers, and in Boston under K.C. Jones, Jim Rodgers and finally, arising from a film analyst to assistant coach for Chris Ford this season in Boston. In the five years he's worked in Boston, he also points out a major influence on his thinking has been Red Auerbach. Jennings was hired by Ford emerging from his role as Video Coordinator, a role he expanded to extensive scouting and analysis of opposing teams' offensive and defensive patterns. "He's consistently making thoughtful input into our game plans and on the bench," says Ford, "(he's done) extraordinarily well for a first year coach, especially in sizing up adjustments on the floor."

Jennings, who is involved in great depth with the Genesis Fund, a provider for the specialized care and treatment of children born with genetic diseases, spoke with Celtics' Pride from courtside before Boston hosted the Nets in Hartford last week.

CELTICS' PRIDE: Before the season, Jon, when asked about what would make the Celtics contenders this season, you thought that if the attitude of the team was aggressive enough, the team would do well. How does the team stack up with the rest of the league now, midyear?

JON JENNINGS: Our talent and track record place us with the best. The league is surprisingly wide-open: after Portland came back to the pack after their amazing start (20-2), any of six or seven can win.

CP: What's the main reason the league is balanced?

JJ: Two factors account for the way the league is the way it is. First, expansion teams of the past few seasons are much better than they have been. The are no easy games any more for any team, so if a good team lets up at all against a team it perceives to be "weak," the favored team will lose. Secondly, dominant teams—like Portland, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Phoenix, San Antonio or Utah—

have been able to win their road games better than in the past few years. I think chartering planes has helped us, and Portland and the Lakers, because any edge will help because of the league's balance.

CP: The Celtics are among the "elite."

JJ: Let's put it this way: It isn't as it once was, when in the mid-Eighties it was exclusively the Lakers and Boston. But we are having a good year, a very satisfying year. We're playing good defense and we're all persuaded on the necessity of the running game. But we are one team who can't take opponents lightly. If we don't make an extended effort—meaning minute lapses!—we're vulnerable. Charlotte upset us on the road a few weeks ago. The Nets beat us in Boston in January. But we've played well deep into the season, so I think we'll be in the hunt.

CP: You're in your first season on the bench. What's been the major differences from there, as opposed to scouting?

JJ: The major difference for me is having extensive input into game preparation and game situations. Before, I'd hand in scouting reports and the coaches would take tips from my reports. Now it's hands-on. But I think I'm also learning an ageless maxim first-hand: A coach is only as good as the players. The best scouting report in the universe won't mean anything without the execution of the players. I suspect all coaches learn that.

CP: What was the turning point of the Celtics' season? You (i.e., the coaches) spoke about the need to run and play sacrificing defense, but when did it all click?

JJ: To me, the turning point of the season for us was the emergence of Brian Shaw as the leader of this team. We knew what the veterans could do and it was obvious that Reggie Lewis and the younger guys, including Brian and Kevin Gamble could play, but until Brian showed he could lead, we were uncertain. He stepped forth and we've been in contention since then, ten games into the regular season.

CP: You're the youngest assistant in the league, but with great influences and teaching. Could you talk about Bob Knight, George Irvine and the Celtics' coaches?

JJ: I have been fortunate. From Coach Knight, it was the value of game preparation. Bob Knight can "break down" an opponent and have that opponent known



Basketball is his first love.

by the time he plays them. He's the best I've ever seen at attacking an opposing team's weakness. Incredibly meticulous and thorough. He's misrepresented in the media, incidentally; once he's your friend, you have him as a loyal friend for life. George Irvine, like the Celtics, was a great communicator. Very very loyal to his players, almost totally honest (within reason) with them. He might have had to confront a Clark Kellogg with some bothersome facts, but he always looked the player directly in the eye and dealt with the facts. This is similar to K.C. and Chris Ford; both of the Celtic coaches I just mentioned had exceptional relationships with their players. Friends to the players, but at the same time, commanding the players' respect through the force of their personality.

CP: It's known how much you respected Jim Rodgers.

JJ: No doubt about it. One of the most brilliant basketball minds in the business. I've been very disappointed he isn't back in the game yet. Whoever gets Jimmy eventually will be getting one of the best professionals in the business.

CP: You are young. How has your youth affected the way you coach this team?

JJ: I think it's relatively easy for the young players on this team to relate to me, precisely because we are in a similar age category. We identify with each other and relate to each other's situations: We're all contributing to a championship (hopefully) effort. I think our players can see that I'm a young single guy as a lot of them are, all of us trying to win a championship. Professionally, it's a matter of mutual respect. I appreciate deeply their talents and their sacrifice and commitment. I believe they see I always go into a game totally prepared. I think they see this. I'm always prepared.

CP: You've spoken in the past of your ambition at one point to become a general manager of a team. What would be your concept?

JJ: I think I'm having some of the most invaluable lessons in the league presently, under Red Auerbach and Dave Gavitt. These are people-oriented leaders, so there's a commitment to basketball throughout the organization. It's a necessary first step. Your organization and players are human beings. On the floor, I think you need athletic backcourt players with defense and size. A low post attack—and threat—which immediately opens up your perimeter on the offensive end. Technique is a matter of reading trends, too. Most critical is the organizational effort. The Celtics win because of the family type atmosphere. People may be cynical about it, but believe me, it's a reality and a reason we win.

CP: You were close to leaving last summer.

JJ: I was close, particularly when our coaching situation was uncertain last spring. But I had a deep commitment to Chris Ford and the Celtics. Fortunately for me, Chris was hired, because I wanted to stay. But K.C. Jones in Seattle made me an attractive offer as well.

CP: At one time last season, you thought you were giving too much of yourself to basketball.

JJ: I thought so, but I worked out a balance. Coach Knight is very effective because he's so intelligent, always coming up with novel ways to motivate people because, for example, he's such an acute student of history.

I love nothing more than basketball—except for kids. But last year I made a concentrated effort to begin balancing my life more. Last summer, I got away from it totally after the draft, began sailing, reading, especially English history, Churchill, Disraeli... And painting, mostly maritime scenes, with acrylics. A different form of expression. All of the other interests, I've found this season, helped: my concentration and energy levels for the game have never been greater.

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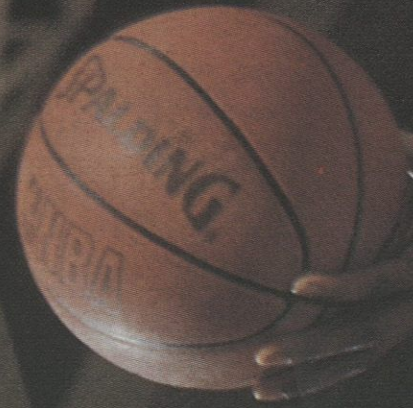
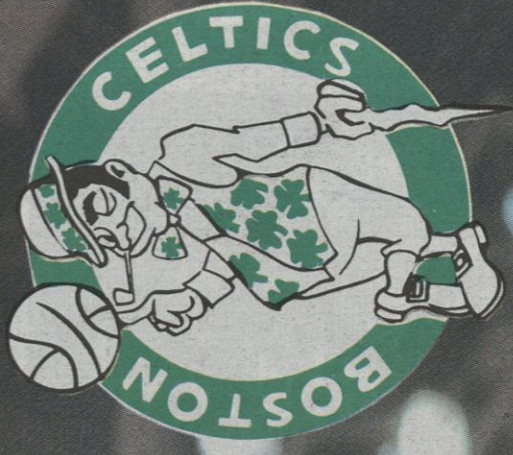
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CELTICS PRIDE

NBA Notebook

Sonics Roll The Dice

By Andy Roth

Sonics' president Bob Whitsitt has done more trading this season than some people on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Gone from the opening day roster are Xavier McDaniel, Dale Ellis, and Olden Polynice. The new faces belong to Benoit Benjamin, Ricky Pierce, and Eddie Johnson. Benjamin, acquired just one day prior to the trading deadline, was the key pick up among the three. He gives the Sonics a legitimate center, something they haven't had since they sent James Donaldson to the Mavericks in 1985.

There are, however, two possible pitfalls to the deal. Benjamin becomes an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season, thus, the Sonics are not assured of retaining his services. Head coach KC Jones thought it was a gamble worth taking. "You seldom get a chance to get a legit big man," KC said, "and we decided to roll the dice and take him, hoping we'll be in good position to deal with him when he becomes a free agent."

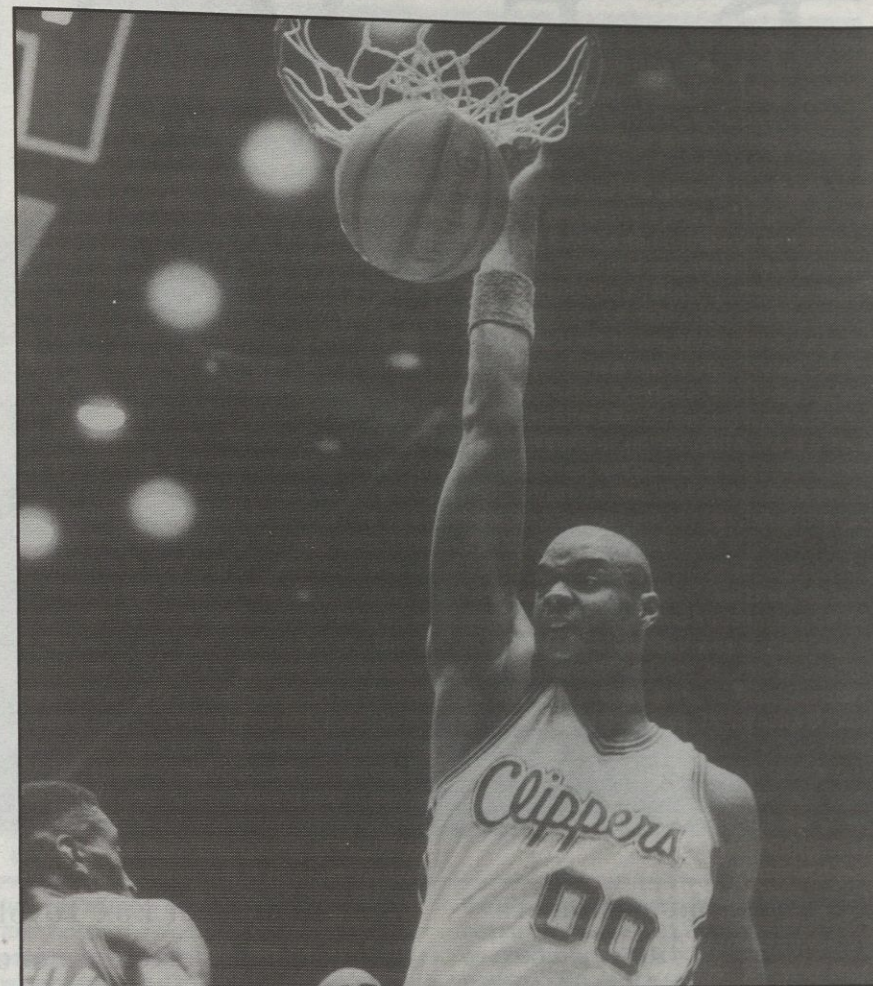
There's also the issue of Benjamin's heart. He's often been accused of not coming to play every night, to which KC responds: "I looked at his numbers and I was totally impressed. He's averaging 15 points a game, 12 rebounds a ball game, and 2.3 blocks a game. How many players can come up with those kind of numbers? That's what I go with."

All the changes have resulted in a very talented team for the Sonics. The starting five (Payton, Threatt, Benjamin, McKey, Kemp) has youth plus talent on its side, while the bench (Pierce, Johnson, Cage, McMillian, Barron) is arguable the best in the league...

"It's crazy around here." Those were the words of Gerald Wilkins following the suspension of teammate Mark Jackson for "insubordinate actions."

Jackson has been airing his displeasure over his backup role through the media, despite the Gag Rule invoked by GM Al Bianchi earlier in the season.

Bianchi finally confronted Jackson at practice. "I told him he's supposed to come to us first with any complaints, and



Benjamin is still unsigned for next year.

I told him that I was going to fine him and I'd suspend him if he kept it up," Bianchi said. "He said something like, 'It's a free country, I'll say what I want' and demanded to be 'treated like a man!'"

Then Coach John McCleod joined the so-called discussion. After Bianchi and McCleod had spoken their peace and were walking away, Jackson, according to Bianchi, "started mumbling something under his breath" and contained obscenities.

Bianchi suspended Jackson on the spot for 4 days, which spanned two games.

I think this calls for a new nickname.

How about Mark "Out of Action" Jackson?...

The Knicks, who were desperately looking for a deal, could not pull one off. Marv Albert, the long-time radio and TV voice of the Knicks, speaking after the deadline passed, was extremely critical of Bianchi. "I think the club had to make a move prior to the season," Albert said. "To think going into the season that this was the group to properly surround Ewing is astounding..." The Knicks have stunk up the joint so badly that one Madison Square Garden fan was spotted wearing a gas mask...

The Pacers just happened to start play-

ing their best basketball when Rik Smits missed five games with bone chips in his elbow. Greg Dreiling took over the starting spot and held onto it even after Smits returned. With Dreiling in the starting lineup the Pacers are 8-4. Coach Bob Hill is getting just what he wants out of Dreiling, and wasn't getting out of Smits — RE-BOUNDING...

JUST FOR LAUGHS. There was Abbott and Costello, Martin and Lewis, and Rowen and Martin. The NBA's version is called Barkley and Mahom. No matter what's actually happening in the game, you're sure to be entertained by their non-basketball antics. Sitting behind the Sixers' bench in a game at the Meadowlands recently, was just as good as being at a comedy club.

Mahom to Barkley after the Nets' Chris Dudley split them for a follow-up slam: "It was your bleepin' fault."

After Manute Bol blocks a shot, Mahom leads the chant of "Nute, Nute," from the bench.

When Barkley goes down the bench to celebrate the impending win, Mahom says straight-faced to him: "Don't hug me."

In the lockerroom after the game, they are at their best, insulting each other, their teammates, and any innocent media victim. Life around the Sixers will never be dull as long as Barkley and Mahom keep their material fresh...

Akeem Olajuwon's impending return was not being met with open arms by Houston fans. Incredibly, the Rockets have played as well without Akeem as they did with him this season. So many fans are wondering if they're better off without him.

Olajuwon's reaction was right to the point. "The thing about the average person on the street is that sometimes they show their ignorance instead of their knowledge of the game," Akeem said. "I know my ability, and when I come back, I will work hard. All I can do is try. If that's not good enough for the man on the street, well, he can go to hell."

I gather subtly has never been Olajuwon's strong point... Larry Smith, Akeem's replacement during his absence, has been a rebound machine. Smith has had four, 20+ rebound games, including an NBA season-high of 25.

1990-91 Boston Celtics Schedule

February — 1991

Fri.	1	—	A	Charlotte	7:30
Sun.	3	—	H	Washington	1:00
Wed.	6	—	H	Charlotte	7:30
Thu.	7	—	A	New York	7:30
Tue.	12	—	A	Seattle	7:00
Thu.	14	—	A	Golden State	7:30
Fri.	15	—	A	LA Lakers	7:30
Sun.	17	—	A	Denver	2:00
Tue.	19	—	A	Phoenix	6:00
Fri.	22	—	*	New Jersey	7:30
Sun.	24	—	A	Indiana	1:00
Tue.	26	—	A	Chicago	7:30
Wed.	27	—	H	Minnesota	7:30

March — 1991

Fri.	1	—	H	San Antonio	8:00
Sun.	3	—	H	Portland	TBA
Mon.	4	—	*	Indiana	7:30
Wed.	6	—	H	Miami	7:30
Fri.	8	—	A	LA Clippers	7:30
Sun.	10	—	A	Portland	7:00
Tue.	12	—	A	Sacramento	7:30
Wed.	13	—	A	Utah	7:00
Fri.	15	—	A	Washington	8:00
Sun.	17	—	H	Philadelphia	12:00
Tue.	19	—	A	Atlanta	8:00
Wed.	20	—	H	Washington	7:30
Fri.	22	—	A	Indiana	7:30

Thu.	28	—	A	Miami	7:30
Fri.	29	—	H	Cleveland	8:00
Sun.	31	—	H	Chicago	12:30

April — 1991

Tue.	2	—	A	New Jersey	7:30
Thu.	4	—	H	New Jersey	7:30
Sat.	6	—	A	Orlando	7:30
Thu.	11	—	A	Milwaukee	7:30
Fri.	12	—	H	Miami	7:30
Sun.	14	—	H	New York	1:00
Tue.	16	—	A	Detroit	7:30
Thu.	18	—	A	Philadelphia	7:30
Fri.	19	—	A	Cleveland	8:00
Sun.	21	—	H	Atlanta	1:00

* — An asterisk denotes a home game in Hartford, CT. All games on WEEI (590 AM) radio. All times are local times, and are all "PM."



March 15, 1991

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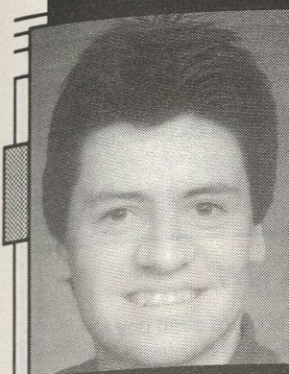


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CELTICS PRIDE

Double Dribbles

Confidence Overflows After West Coast Trip



By Mike Spellman

If you're a Celtics fan, you've got to be ecstatic over the team's 4-1 West Coast swing and even more enthralled with their general level of play with Larry Bird back in the line-up.

With each of their four wins, the degree of confidence, not to mention the ability to execute, in the local lads seemed to increase steadily, and even the 109-105 setback in Phoenix to cap off the trip on a less than perfect note produced a fair amount of optimism. And when one considers that the down-to-the-wire loss came on the road, against a completely healthy and supposedly legitimate contender, with Kevin McHale in civies, Derek Smith still on the sidelines and Mister B. suffering through one of his most abysmal shooting nights in recent memory (5-for-23), it's not too difficult to see why.

Obviously, their success on the opposite coast is the type of momentum builder every true play-off hopeful wishes for around this time of year to carry them down the home stretch and into the post-season.

Right now, the mood with the boys in green is as upbeat as it's been all year—yes, even better than it was when they were jumping out to the torrid 29-5 start—the reason being that the end is now clearly in sight and they're still clearly the team to beat in the Eastern Conference. Moreover, Larry's back is reportedly feeling as good as it has all year long. Reggie Lewis seems determined of late to take his game to the next level, Kevin McHale's ankle injury is not expected to linger, Derek Smith (a.k.a., 'the missing piece of the puzzle') is apparent closing in on his debut in a Celtics uniform, all other team members are enjoying relatively good health and they're presently getting important contributions from nine players (when is the last time you could honestly say this about a Celtics team?).

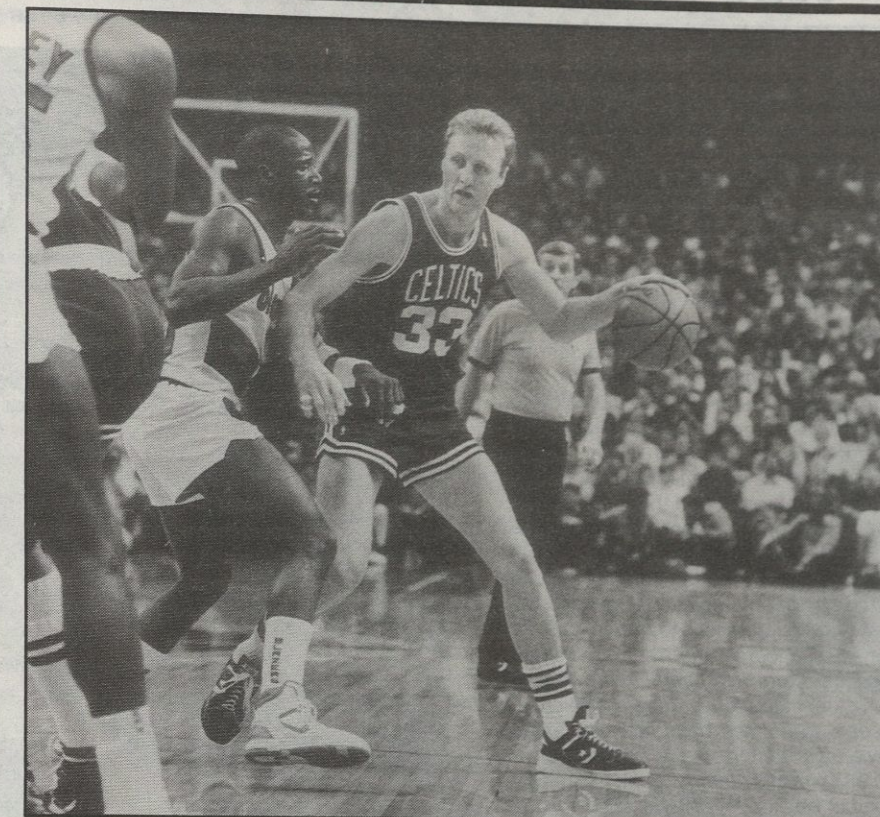
Even beyond the concrete, you can just see it in the way they're playing that their confidence is soaring, as well it should be. They've got the chemistry, a well balanced rotation, the requisite experience and the leadership, the necessary youthful energy and athleticism, the proven ability to go at opponents with either an up-tempo or half court attack, and a defensive scheme that's been proven effective.

And though there are still two full months remaining in the regular season, it's pretty clear to see that the C's need concern themselves with only one other team having a realistic shot at challenging them for supremacy in the east—the Chicago Bulls.

When this edition went to print, only a game and a half stood between the Atlantic runaway Celtics, at 39-13, and the Central Division leading Bulls, at 37-14, and winners of their last seven in a row.

In the search for potential advantages down the stretch, right off the bat we can see that the Bulls have the softer travel schedule remaining. While the C's play only 12 of their final 30 games within the friendly confines of Boston Garden, Michael and the Jordanettes are playing 16 of the 29 gigs they have left at Chicago Stadium.

However, upon closer inspection, we can see that, of the 18 dates on foreign



The Celtics have improved their play with the addition of Larry Bird back in the line-up.

turf, two of them are at the C's home away from home—the Hartford Civic Center—and only seven of them are against clubs with winning records. The prospects for W's will be even better on the sacred parquet, with only five of the 12 contests coming against teams with a better than .500 success ratio. Meanwhile, Chicago must meet 14 more times against clubs with mostly W's.

What of the Motown Bad Boys, you ask? Well, even with a softer schedule than the two current leaders in the Eastern Conference and a not too distant 37-17 record, the threepeat-minded Pistons will be in a maintain mode until Isiah returns from wrist surgery, which would occur deep into the post-season, if at all.

Speaking of the Celtics present roster, it would appear that management is going to have somewhat of an enviable dilemma on their hands come this Fall.

Really, for the first time during the 'Bird Era', the Celtics have a full complement of players they earnestly value. As I alluded above, they've got ten players who fit into the immediate scheme of things (Bird, McHale, Parish, Gamble, Shaw, Lewis, Brown, Pinckney, Kleine and Derek Smith), while the remaining two roster spots are occupied by projected future impact players Stojko Vrankovic and Michael Smith.

I realize, of course, that it is still way too early for us regular folks to be thinking about this. Needless to say, however, given the difficulties that would be imminent if the front office simply stayed the course, it would seem a virtual must that some sort of deal be worked out between the end of the play-offs and the 12 man roster cut down in November.

Do I know how to segue or what? Even with Derek Smith's debut appearing to be a better than decent probability before season's end, it came as somewhat of a surprise to many observers that

the C's didn't turn some sort of minor deal before the February 21 trading deadline in an attempt to fill what is arguably their only perceptible hole—the lack of a pure shooting guard. Considering the logjam of decent backcourt long rangers on a few NBA rosters—Charlotte, Seattle, Chicago and the L.A. Clippers come to mind—it seems that a relatively painless acquisition could have been made for a player who might have come in pretty handy in the play-offs, where opponents traditionally try to force the Celtics to beat them from the outside.

So, what's the deal with Reggie Lewis all of a sudden?

No one seems to now whether his torrid play of late is a response to some of the less than flattering observations that have been slapped on his game by local scribes in recent weeks, or a sudden discovery of just how valuable a properly lowered shoulder can be when taking the ball strong into paint, or a result of the holes in the defense Larry's mere presence on the floor is again creating, or simply a case of his back feeling better. For all we know, it could be all or none of the above. Whose to say. But, then again, who really cares so long as it continues.

It's things like this that give sportswriters, and the press in general, a bad name. How could anyone with even half a heart, not to mention half a brain, have gone after Bernard King, who many medical experts had predicted just a few years ago would never even be able to play competitive basketball again, for stating publicly that being named an All-Star this year was the realization of his greatest dream.

The story of King's rehabilitation, and the seemingly endless hours he spent strengthening and retraining his left knee to work as it had before the necessary removal of his anterior cruciate ligaments, will almost certainly go down in the annals

of sports history as one of the all time most inspiring individual comeback stories.

For nearly two years, Bernard King was a non-entity as far as just about everyone connected with the NBA was concerned. Sure, he may have received some advice and direction from the New York Knicks medical personnel, but every drop of the many ounces of blood, sweat and tears that were spilled belonged to him.

For a very long time, King's only regular companions were his weights and stationary bike. In solitude, he set certain personal goals for himself, the greatest of which was to become the first to ever play in the NBA All-Star game without anterior cruciate ligaments. Concerned friends and family suggested sensitively that he was setting his sights way too high, yet this assertion served only to increase his resolve.

There is no one who could possibly love or admire athletic pursuits of any kind and not be exceedingly happy for Bernard King today, and no one anywhere who would deny him the right to feel very good about himself and what he's accomplished.

There are, however, a few individuals who believe that Bernard should have bridled the sheer ecstasy that naturally accompanied the attainment of his ultimate desire in the interest of team unity. When he did not, he was accused by these people of being selfish. Unfortunately, (and I say this not only because of the general disgrace of their contention but also because I share a profession with a few of them), some of these people were sports-writers.

Now certainly, in just about all cases, the success of one's own team should be a players' primary and unyielding concern, after all that's what they're being compensated for. However, in Bernard's case, the argument in support of special one time clemency should be plain for anyone to see. The fact that he made it back to the NBA at all, never mind the fact that it has been to nearly 100 percent of his old self, is testament first and foremost to King's character.

Think about it: As an established superstar years before his injury, he needn't have ever had another financial concern. Loyalties? Only to himself for just about the duration of the long, lonely road back, after Knicks management showed their true colors by trying to pressure him back into the fold on a knee that was softer than cheese. What was there left to focus on but personal performance for the better part of two whole years of his life?

Get out your pens and best stationary Celtics fans. If you are what you proclaim to be, you are going to compose a heartfelt letter in which you will beg, plead or demand team management to get Kevin Gamble signed to a long term contract A.S.A.P.

Kevin Gamble, the best bargain in the NBA this year by far, has three months remaining before his one-year \$375,000 contract expires and he becomes fair game to the rest of the league. Gamble himself has already expressed a desire to remain with the Celtics, while his agent, Ron Grinker, has fulfilled his primary obligation by voicing pessimism when asked about the prospects of a quick deal being worked out.

Come on now. Do your best. However, if you don't have the time or you just can't think of anything compelling to say, a simple post card with the message "GET IT DONE" should suffice.

Mike Spellman is a correspondent for the Brockton Enterprise in Brockton, Massachusetts.



March 15, 1991

Confidential

Who Is Coach Of The Year?

By Bob Schron

Coach of the Year. A positive sign of these times in Boston in 1990-91 is that Celtic coach **Chris Ford** should be one of the frontrunners for NBA Coach of the Year. Remember last summer, when all that was heard were virtual demands that the Celtic nucleus of the Eighties, **Larry Bird**, **Robert Parish** and **Kevin McHale**, be disassembled? Controversy played tag with two other key figures, **Brian Shaw**, returning from II Messaggero with lawsuit/counter lawsuit, and **Reggie Lewis**, who in a span of twenty-four hours, first announced he would be playing his final season in Boston and then later that period, re-signed with the team. Meanwhile, **Kevin Gamble** silently renewed with the team on the eve of Pre-Season camp, flying into Boston alone that night, unable to find a meal, his Boston apartment still empty, the plane having arrived in the early hours of the morning. Ford drew all of these disparate elements together, at the same time establishing close working ties with the shrewd **Dave Gavitt**, who initially had seriously considered **Mike Krzyzewski** for Ford's job.

Bill Fitch, Nets' coach who coached Ford in Boston, was asked last week about Ford. "When I had Chris in Boston, the idea he would be a head coach one day was a 100% certainty. He has the knowledge, the analytical ability, the will to be able to motivate people. Every day I pick up the newspaper and am proud of the job he's doing, except when we play them, of course."

A key to this season's success, thought Fitch, was the team's success recently on the West Coast. "When they had that great trip, it was critical — especially for Chris. It showed that even in foreign arenas and different difficult time zones, he could keep the team locked into their game plan."

Interestingly, two other serious candidates are former Celtics **Don Chaney** in Houston and **K.C. Jones** in Seattle. When **Akeem Olajuwon** went out with a serious facial fracture, arguably, the Rockets, considered limited before this serious blow to the team, were through. Instead, last week Houston was 31-23, sixth in the West. Jones deserves mention. Criticism, unwarranted, has always been that he's unable to work with young players. But he has the team in the playoffs at this point in time, despite several trades, deleting **Xavier McDaniel**, for example. K.C.'s kept talented, but excitable kids together, even as the majority underestimate him as a coach.

NOTES. Fitch on Robert Parish at age 37: "I thought that once Robert showed he was able to bounce back and play effectively after suffering several bad injuries in the 1987 playoffs (knee and ankle sprains), he would be fine. He's still effective because he has a great body and he has a phenomenal work ethic. One thing you always knew about the Chief: He always comes to play. Right now, I look at him and I see years in front of him. Not even as a backup center."... The Celtics continued to take **Derek Smith's** return to the team slowly last week. "There's not a timetable," said Dave Gavitt. "I'm concerned he comes back when he's ready. I'm con-



Fitch has done a great job in Jersey.

cerned that the media is pressuring him into thinking he'll be ready before he actually is." Yet, in a sportscast, Boston's WBZ's **Bob Lobel**, who has a source within the team at an apparently high level, reported February 24th that Smith would debut in mid-March... Lobel was also one of the first to report that Bird's injury would keep him out for the near-month it did... **Jon Jennings** thinks that an NBA All-Star Olympic team composed predominantly of NBA All-Stars would win the Barcelona Games rather easily. "Anyone who thinks that the great players in this league wouldn't be able to work as a team is completely wrong. I walked into the locker room in the All-Star Game in Charlotte (where Chris Ford, Jennings and **Don Casey** were Star coaches) and I was totally amazed: **Michael Jordan**, **Charles Barkley** and **Patrick Ewing**, for example, were totally focused on winning. I was amazed, but really, very proud to be part of that. In fact, Barkley started getting on me to become more serious about winning."... Fitch: "I've coached over fifteen hundred NBA games, and I'll tell you, losing is *always* hard... it just never gets any easier."... More than ever, coaching is a young man's game... After the Nets-Celtics game in Hartford, Dave Gavitt exchanged pleasantries with **Sam Bowie**, yet another in the endless line Gavitt has been associated with in the league in what the CEO calls his "rookie year." Gavitt coached Bowie in the 1980 Olympics. "I was totally impressed with the man (Gavitt)" commented Bowie. "He always had an idea of what he wanted to get accomplished: in practices, in games."... Both Bowie and rookie sensation **Derek Coleman** were awed by the performance of Parish that night. "With **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**

gone, Robert's the man," said Bowie and Coleman agreed: "I grew up watching Robert and it's a privilege to play opposite him. He's great: His finesse... he knows when to spin, when to use power. He concentrates fully, refuses to get too emotional and it's something I'm learning watching him."... Kevin McHale only began to realize how serious his sprained left ankle was when the team returned home from the West Coast. He's been sullen at practice, frustrated at the healing time period. Usually talkative, he'd only say the sprain was a "bad one."... The Celtics were defeated in Indiana, hurt by the three-point sniping of **Reggie Miller**. But the previous night in Indianapolis, Larry Bird was an honored guest of Miller's on the latter's TV show. Bird back home in Indiana... One Who Knows Bird thinks the

latter would be an outstanding coach when he's through playing... Bull's coach **Phil Jackson** was not pleased that Chris Ford played Jordan extended minutes in the All-Star Game while limiting the time of Parish and McHale in the same setting. "Michael was tired and I had to go easy with him in practice the following day. It's something you have to think about," Jackson continued, referring to Ford's decision to play Jordan the way he did. "But I understand Chris's dilemma, too; Michael was back home in Charlotte and people there wanted to see him perform. Plus, Chris had a good unit going in the fourth quarter. It's more than just a black and white issue."... The C's and Bulls squared off in the Chicago stadium last week, with first place in the East on the line... **Chris Mullin** of the Warriors thought the Bulls would win the East... The Celtics refused to rush McHale, Smith, and before them, Bird back into action. "What's important is how healthy we'll be in the spring (meaning the playoffs)," commented Gavitt. "In order to win then, we'll have to be first healthy," adding other factors would be how much the team can improve defensively, and how well the team can execute its halfcourt offense."... **Don Nelson**, former Celtic and one of the thorough thinkers in the sport, was passed over for Olympic coach, as the committee chose **Chuck Daly** instead. Nelson was disappointed that people perceived him as "campaigning" for the position. "I put in two summers, normally free time, preparing myself for the possibility of coaching the U.S. Team. If people think that's 'campaigning,' then I'm sorry. I looked at it as preparation."... Friend **Dave Cowens**, Hall of Fame electee, seconded Nelson's sentiments...

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1990-91 Boston Celtics Roster

NO.	NAME	POS	HGT	WGT	BIRTHDATE	COLLEGE	YEARS PRO
5	John Bagley *	G	6-0	192	4/23/60	B.C.	8
33	Larry Bird	F	6-9	220	12/7/56	Indiana State	11
7	Dee Brown	G	6-1	161	11/29/68	Jacksonville	R-1 (19)
34	Kevin Gamble	G-F	6-5	210	11/13/65	Iowa	3
53	Joe Kleine	C	7-0	271	1/4/62	Arkansas	5
35	Reggie Lewis	G-F	6-7	195	11/21/65	Northeastern	3
32	Kevin McHale	F-C	6-10	225	12/19/57	Minnesota	10
00	Robert Parish	C	7-1/2	230	8/30/53	Centenary	14
54	Ed Pinckney	F	6-9	215	3/27/63	Villanova	5
42	Dave Popson	F	6-10	230	5/17/64	North Carolina	1
20	Brian Shaw	G	6-6	190	3/22/66	UCSB	1
11	Michael Smith	F	6-10	225	5/19/65	BYU	1
52	Stojko Vrankovic	C	7-2	260	1/22/64	(Yugoslavia)	R/FA
43	Derek Smith*	G-F	6-6	218	11/1/61	Louisville	8

Head Coach: Chris Ford

Chief Scout: Forddy Anderson

Scouts: M.L. Carr, John Kuester, Donald Mead, Misho Ostarcevic, Rick Weitzman

* Injured Reserve

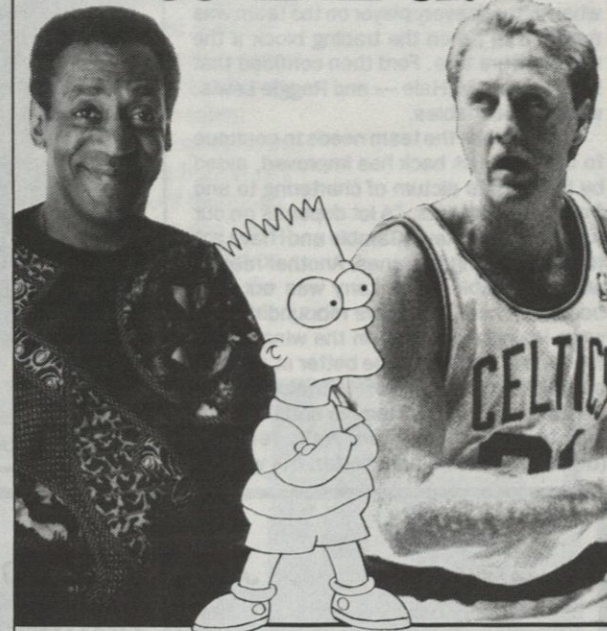
Asst. Coach: Don Casey, Jon Jennings

Trainer: Ed Lacerte

As of February 13, 1991



Bill, Bart & Bird.



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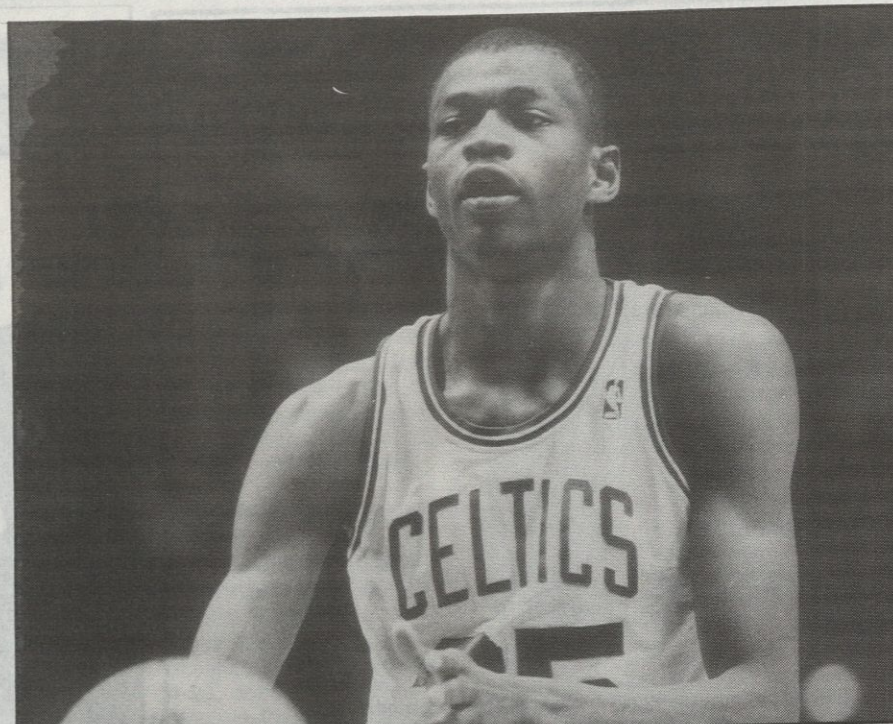


REGGIE LEWIS STORY ...Continued from page 9

McHale, but Robert's leadership is undeniable. Reggie's the same way."

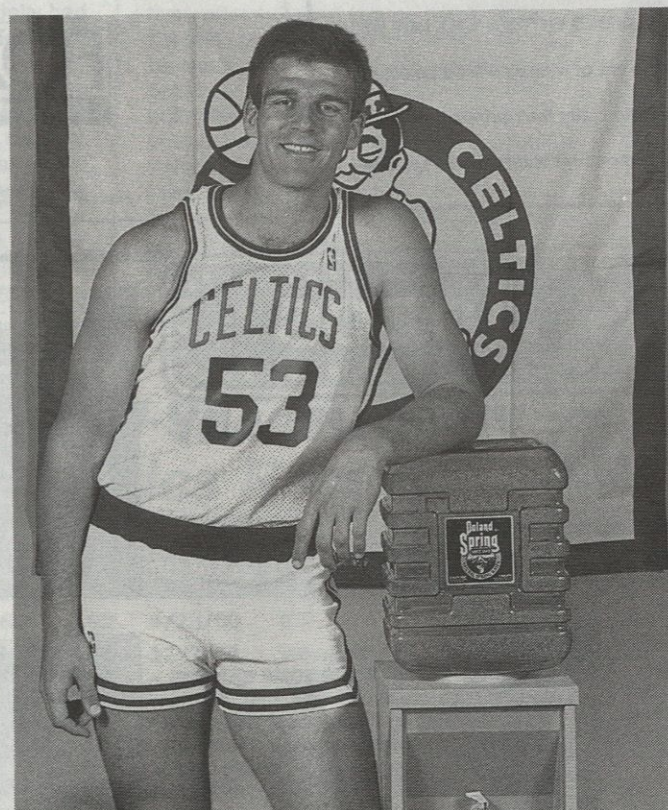
Chris Ford: "Offensively and defensively, Reggie's been great. I've been after him to get the ball to the paint because I think he settles probably too often for the outside shot when he really has the ability to get the ball where he wants to." Ford, coach of the team, had been asked last summer, when virtually every player on the team was rumored to be on the trading block if the rumors were true. Ford then confided that Bird, Parish, McHale — and Reggie Lewis, were untouchables.

Lewis thinks the team needs to continue to improve. His back has improved, aided by the team's dictum of chartering to and from road contests. "A lot depends on our running game. Kevin Gamble and I have got to keep running the lanes. Another reason we had trouble when Larry was out was because I had to do more rebounding. We were losing a position on the wing of the break. But we need to be better at reading situations, too; if Larry or Kevin McHale are on the bench, Kevin Gamble and I have to look to score more often. We're realizing (these responsibilities) better, but we still



Reggie: "Actions speak louder than words."

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have to be better at it."

Lewis's road trip had been strong, substantive, consistent: 30 points-5 assists in Seattle, 24 and 5 in Oakland, 26 and 4 and 2 steals against the Lakers, concluding later with 23 points-7 rebounds and 2 blocked shots in Phoenix. "People around the league know him," says Pinckney. "And I don't care if fans do or not. Players do." But fans now are aware of Lewis, too, because of a funky Reebok dunking commercial he filmed during the fall, a slightly technologized video which depicts the Baltimorean soaring for time-suspended "Reggie Lewis" jams.

"The fans are calling out to me more, and it's been fun, I admit it. They'll be calling out, 'Let's see the Reggie Lewis jam, and I'll laugh about it."

"Things are good."

He's probed now, sitting inside of his jeep-styled automobile. Lewis is asked if he can take anybody to the basket with the strength of that magical first step.

"Yeah." The elemental honesty.

But he's reminded, he isn't comfortable talking about it openly.

Lewis laughs now. "Action speaks louder than words," he says. And it's apparent he's thought it out and isn't boasting.

DUCKY MEAD STORY ...Continued from page 7

anything but "Ducky." He has a few amusing tales of how he acquired the handle, but finally came clean at the Boston College game.

"I had a hundred nicknames as a kid. For one reason or another, Ducky stuck, relative to Donald Duck. I think somebody thought I walked like him," he said with a grin. "Ducky is a good person. He's a piece of work. Everybody likes Ducky," said Kuester.

Basketball has been in his blood for many years, and the physical education teacher at the Elm Street Junior High in Nashua who moonlights as a valuable scout still sometimes yearns for the heat of battle from the sideline.

"I miss coaching terribly. I thought the feeling would go away, but it has gotten worse since I last coached (Nashua High, 1976). I'll coach 100 games in summer camps. I had a lot of fun last summer in rookie camp. During the day I got to work with players like Dee a little on his shooting and worked with Eddie (Pinckney) a little bit too. It (coaching sense) never leaves you," he admitted.

The fun never stops for Mead, even when he goes to work. But the smiling face turns serious when he has to get down to business, something he takes seriously in an effort to contribute to the organization.

"I think I contribute something. Red knows where I'm coming from in terms of basketball. I've worked his camp for 100 years and lectured there.

I hope I have a valuable input and will help in any way I can. If the Celtics want a wastebasket emptied, I'll be there," he joked, with his sincerity and dedication coming through loud and clear, as well as his love for his work and the game.

Burning the midnight oil, sorting through notes on hundreds of players, wearing out tires traveling to the farthest reaches of New England's wilderness and inhaling fumes from fat green cigars are all part of a way of life for Mead. He wouldn't have it any other way as long as he knows he has contributed to the team's success in his own special way.

That satisfaction is his reward as it is for all scouts who truly have remained trail blazers, even in this day and age. To Mead every expedition pays its just reward.

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Game By Game

Celtics Won The West

By Bob Schron

BOSTON 128, GOLDEN STATE 112
FEBRUARY 14
OAKLAND

The Celtics won their second straight game in their western trip with a win over the Warriors, who had defeated the Celtics in Boston last month.

Larry Bird, who had missed the previous encounter, starred for the Celtics as Boston pulled away down the stretch. Bird led the Celtics in scoring with 29 points, including 4 for 6 from three point distance.

"It was a very big win for us," commented Chris Ford afterward.

"One of our strengths against the Warriors is our size. Without Kevin McHale, we knew we'd be in for a struggle. I just told our guys we had to keep putting bodies on bodies (boxing out) and they responded." The Celtics were playing without McHale, who suffered a badly sprained left ankle in the team's 114-111 win over the Seattle SuperSonics. Boston however, weathered a strong performance by All Star Chris Mullin (35 pts) and stopped the tempo-affecting play of the Warrior guards, Tim Hardaway and Mitch Richmond. Hardaway, who had scored 37 in Boston, scored 18 with 12 assists, but only 7-17 FGs, Richmond had 17 pts but 5-18 FGs.

Reggie Lewis added 24 points as seven players scored in double figures. Dee Brown (14 pts) and Ed Pinckney (11 pts - 7 rebs and his second straight strong game) provided strong bench help as the C's pulled away from a 58-58 half-time tie to lead 94-85 after three quarters.

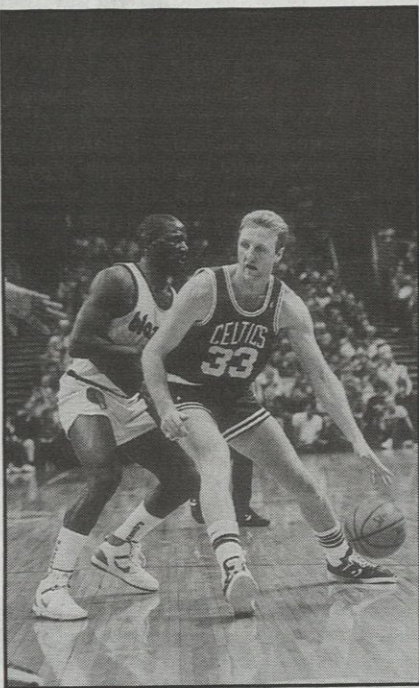
BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts						
Bird	37	11-17	3-3	1-1	4	29						
Gamble	42	7-17	2-4	0-2	6	16						
Parish	31	9-14	0-0	3-12	2	18						
Lewis	38	8-17	8-9	4-8	0	24						
Shaw	32	7-15	2-2	3-7	4	16						
Kleine	7	0-4	0-0	2-5	0	2						
Pinckney	26	4-6	3-3	3-7	0	11						
Smith	6	0-1	0-0	1-1	0	0						
Brown	21	5-8	0-1	0-1	0	10						
TOTALS	240	49-98	26-29	17-81	28	128						

GOLDEN STATE												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts						
Mullin	45	11-19	11-11	2-2	2	35						
Tolbert	20	5-9	1-2	1-4	3	11						
Lester	21	3-6	0-2	1-5	1	6						
Hardaway	39	7-17	2-3	4-6	12	18						
Richmond	43	5-18	7-9	1-4	0	12						
Hill	7	0-1	2-2	1-4	3	2						
Petersen	11	3-3	0-0	1-4	0	3						
Higgins	19	2-6	1-1	1-5	0	4						
Maroulis	14	3-6	2-2	0-1	1	8						
Moksis	6	0-1	0-0	1-3	2	0						
Pritchard	12	1-5	0-0	0-0	2	2						
Robinson	3	0-1	2-2	1-1	0	2						
TOTALS	240	40-92	28-34	14-40	24	112						

FG% 43.5; FT% 82.4; Three-pt. goals: 4-14, 28.6% (Mullin 2-4, Tolbert 0-3, Hardaway 2-2, Richmond 0-1, Higgins 0-3, Pritchard 0-3); Team Rebounds: 12; Blocked: 3 (Richmond 2, Petersen 1); Turnovers: 17 (Mullin 3, Hardaway 2, Richmond 2, Higgins 1, Maroulis 2); Steals: 10 (Mullin 1, Hardaway 2, Richmond 5, Maroulis 1, Robinson 1); Technical Fouls: Tolbert (3rd); Illegal Defense: none.

BOSTON 98, LOS ANGELES 85
FEBRUARY 15
GREAT WESTERN FORUM

Vlade Divac stunned the Celtics and Robert Parish the 1st time Divac faced the



Bird made the difference.

C's in a 119-110 LA win over the C's last season. Parish has been able to summon strong efforts vs. the Lakers even in the post-Abdul-Jabbar years. Parish did it again in this contest, smoking the Lakers for 21 1st Q points enroute to a 29 point-10 rebound night. And the C's, inspired by their veteran leaders' spectacular, outdefended the Lakers for their first win in the GW Forum since 1986, coincidentally, their last title season. "It was just one of those nights when everything was going," commented Parish. "I was on a roll, so I stayed with it. Plus," he joked, alluding to the absent injured Kevin McHale, "with Kevin out, we have all these shots to divide up. I just got my share of those."

Parish's output had more than aesthetic import because the C's had exploded for 35 points in the opening stanza against a team which allows 99 points per game (the C's would finish below that, of course). But the C's, ironically dictating an uptempo game against the famed LA streakers, led 35-27 after the 1st Q and 58-47 at intermission, as Reggie Lewis (26 pts) and Kevin Gamble (14) carried the load. The Lakers would close to within five and then three (73-70) in the third quarter, but each time, the Celtics responded, principally behind Larry Bird, who, playing back-to-back games, turned in a triple double (11 pts-11 rebs-11 asts) and critical leadership down the stretch. James Worthy led LA with 23 points and Magic Johnson had 21 and 16 assists. But against the Lakers most of the figures in the game felt the key to the win was the Boston defense. "The key is we're getting after people defensively," said Parish. "It was the game on the trip I really wanted," said Bird. "We hadn't beaten Magic in LA in quite a while.

BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts						
Bird	40	4-16	2-2	0-11	11	11						
Gamble	47	6-13	2-2	1-6	4	14						
Parish	35	13-16	3-3	4-10	0	29						
Lewis	42	12-23	2-2	0-3	4	26						
Shaw	34	5-10	0-0	0-3	6	10						
Pinckney	20	2-3	0-0	3-5	1	4						

Kleine	7	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0
Brown	14	1-3	0-0	0	3	0	2
M. Smith	1	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	2
TOTALS	240	44-85	9-9	9-29	28	18	98

FG% .518; FT% 1.000; Three-pt. goals: 1-4, .250 (Bird 1-3, Shaw 0-1); Team Rebounds: 5; Blocked: 5 (Parish 2, Gamble, Shaw, Pinkney); Turnovers: 9 (Bird 2, Parish 2, Shaw 2, Gamble Brown, M. Smith); Steals: 10 (Bird 2, Gamble 2, Lewis 2, Shaw 2, Brown 2); Technical Fouls: none; illegal Defense: none.

FG% 42.2; FT% 66.7; Three-pt. goals: 1-11, .091 (Johnson 1-4, Worthy 0-1, Scott 0-2, Perkins 0-4); Team Rebounds: 10; Blocked: 3 (Divac, Johnson, Thompson); Turnovers: 11 (Worthy 3, Perkins 3, Johnson 2, Green, Divac, T. Smith); Steals: 5 (Divac, Johnson, Perkins, T. Smith, Campbell); Technical Fouls: None; Illegal Defense: none.

BOSTON 126, DENVER 108.
FEBRUARY 17
MCNICOLS ARENA

Larry Bird scored 26 points, including 17 (7-9 FGs) in the first quarter as the Celtics were never seriously threatened in defeating the Nuggets. Denver, whose record of 14-35 after the loss is the league's worst, was further hampered because of the absence of All Star caliber guard, former Boston College player Michael Adams. Adams missed the contest with an injured hamstring.

The Celtics scored the final five points of the first quarter for a 36-23 advantage and pulled away through the middle stanzas. Kevin Gamble and Reggie Lewis sparked a 2nd Q running attack that ballooned the lead to 67-41 at the intermission. Lewis's 11 2nd Q points highlighted an early 9-4 run which made the lead 45-27 and the C's, knowing they couldn't allow a cellar-dweller to take a win from them, continued to apply the pressure throughout. "I didn't like our intensity at the start," commented Bird afterward. "But then we saw we could really get our running game going against these guys, so we jumped on it."

Boston led 97-74 after three quarters. Brian Shaw nearly turned in a triple-double (12 pts-9 asts-9 rebs) and in the finale, Michael Smith's 15 points kept the Celtics out of reach. The Celtics played their third straight game without Kevin McHale, still sidelined with the sprained ankle, injured in Seattle. Denver led in scoring by Orlando Woolridge with 23 and rookie Chris Jackson with 20, is 1-13 in games Adams has missed this season.

BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts						
Bird	25	10-16	1-2	2-8	4	2	24					
Gamble	32	10-17	1-2	1-3	6	1	21					
Parish	22	3-5	1-2	3-8	0	2	7					
Shaw	27	6-12	0-0	3-9	9	2	12					
Lewis	35	6-15	5-6	0-4	1	2	17					
Kleine	22	1-4	2-4	2-7	0	2	4					
Brown	24	4-8	6-9	1-3	3	4	16					
Pinckney	29	2-6	3-3	0-7	1	2	7					
Smith	16	6-8	2-2	1-2	1	1	15					
Popson	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Vranjkovic	4	1-2	1-4	0-0	0	1	3					
TOTALS	240	40-83	24-34	13-31	28	20	126					

FG% 52.7; FT% 70.6; Three-pt. goals: 4-7, 57.1% (Bird 3-6, Smith 1-4); Team Rebounds: 13; Blocked: 2 (Shaw 1, Pinckney 1); Turnovers: 18 (Bird 5, Gamble 2, Shaw 2, Lewis 3, Kleine 1, Pinckney 2, Smith 3); Steals: 12 (Bird 3, Gamble 2, Parish 1, Lewis 1, Brown 2, Pinckney 3); Technical Fouls: none; Illegal Defense: 1.

DENVER									
	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts		
Woolridge	28	10-18	3-5	1-3	3	1	23		
Wolf	21	2-8	0-0	2-4	4	3	4		
Rasmussen	34	7-10	1-2	2-10	1	5	15		
Jackson	32	10-21	0-0	2-5	6	1	20		
Williams	39	7-10	1-2	2-10	1	5	15		
Battle	16	1-2	0-0	0-2	1	1	2		
Cook	23	4-8	0-0	0-2	1	0	8		
Neal	15	1-5	2-4	0-1	3	3	4		
Anderson	13	2-5	0-2	1-3	0	2	4		
Liberty	10	2-8	2-2	0-3	0	4	7		
Lane	9	1-3	0-0	3-5	1	1	2		
TOTALS	240	47-106	12-20	13-44	23	108			

FG% 44.3; FT% 12.20; Three-pt. goals: 2-9, 22.2% (Jackson 0-1, Williams 1-4, Neal 0-2, Liberty 1-2); Team Rebounds: 13; Blocked: 3 (Woolridge 1, Wolf 1, Williams 1); Turnovers: 15 (Woolridge 3, Rasmussen 1, Jackson 2, Williams 4, Battle 1, Cook 1, Neal 2); Steals: 12 (Wolf 2, Rasmussen 1, Jackson 2, Williams 4, Battle 1, Anderson 2); Technical Fouls: none; Illegal Defense: none.

PHOENIX 109, BOSTON 105
FEBRUARY 19
VETERAN'S MEMORIAL COLISEUM

Kevin Johnson scored 15 of his game-high 25 points in the 4th quarter and the Suns rallied to overtake the Celtics in the final game of the western trip. Boston attempting to sweep the journey through the west, had its seven game winning streak snapped (including four previous wins over Seattle, Golden State, the Lakers and Denver).

The Celtics, playing without Kevin McHale again, had this game in its grasp, but as the game proved uptempo for forty-eight minutes, in the end, Phoenix, also a fine running team, prevailed on its home floor. Behind Robert Parish's 1st Q explosion of 12 points and 10 rebounds (Parish would finish with 21 points and 20 rebounds), the Celtics led by 32-21 with 1:00 left in the opening stanza. But in a telling series, the Suns' great 6th man, Dan Majerle, out ran the field for a pair of three-point plays (FG and FT) to close the gap to 32-27 at the quarter.

This sequence identified both a key figure for the evening as well as the game's theme: the visiting Celtics attempted to place a safe distance between the Suns and themselves all night but the classy Phoenix team refused to yield. The unit of Johnson-Majorie-Xavier McDaniel-Mark West and Jeff Hornacek edged Phoenix in front at the half, 54-52. After intermission, though, the Celtics reasserted itself with Reggie Lewis and Kevin Gamble attacking the basket, Boston went back out in front, with margins of 74-65 and 82-73, the latter advantage with but a minute left in the third period. But then the Suns fought back, a 12-0 run which extended into the 4th Q, and then 6-0 after two Joe Kleine FTs. The C's would rally behind Parish, cutting the deficit to 104-103, but were hurt this night by Larry Bird's off shooting night (5-23 for the night, 0-3 in the final 2:00). "No excuses," said Bird. "just kept shooting it short tonight. "Next time I'll go out and shoot 23 more. Maybe then they'll go in."

BOSTON									
	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts		
Bird	44	5-23	0-0	2-8	3	4	17		
Gasble	37	9-17	2-2	1-3	3	4	20		
Pariah	43	8-14	5-7	6-20	1	3	21		
Lewis	43	8-22	7-7	2-7	0	4	23		
Shaw	46	9-17	3-3	1-6	10	5	21		
Pinkney	17	2-2	3-4	1-2	0	5	7		
Kleine	7	0-1	2-2	1-3	0	2	0		
Brown	5	0-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	0		
TOTALS	240	40-81	22-25	18-50	17	27	100		
FG% 44.0, FT% 88.0, Three-pt. goals: 17, 14.3% (Bird 1-6, Shaw 1-2, Pariah 5-7, Lewis 7-7, Gasble 2-2, Pinkney 3-4, Kleine 0-1, Brown 0-1)									
Reb: 27 (Bird 3, Shaw 10, Pariah 6, Gasble 3, Lewis 2, Pinkney 1, Kleine 1, Brown 1), Assists: 10 (Bird 4, Shaw 5, Pariah 3, Gasble 4, Lewis 4, Pinkney 0, Kleine 0, Brown 0), Turnovers: 10 (Bird 4, Shaw 5, Pariah 3, Gasble 4, Lewis 4, Pinkney 0, Kleine 0, Brown 0)									



By Glenn Rifkin

The Fan's Eyeview

Remember The Feeling



For the Celtics to win a title, one critical (perhaps essential) player is none other than Edward Lewis Pinckney.

This morning I wake up and my newspaper reinforces what I already know: the Larry Bird Magical Kicking Butt Road Show has slaughtered Denver to run their record on this trip to 4-0. When you read this the trip will be long gone and McHale will be back and another road trip will be looming. But you will remember the feeling. It is the antithesis of what you were feeling just a few weeks ago, when the Larry-less Celtics were stumbling along and everyone was taking back all the nice things they had said.

I said earlier in this season that there would be some bumpy moments. I didn't need to be the Magnificent Kreskin to figure that out. But I also said that this team is for real. This team is a title contender, no doubt about it. It will take a healthy Larry, that is the only certainty. You just can't underestimate what this man means to the team.

If it doesn't take much insight to say that Bird is a given, i.e., he's got to be there or the whole thing collapses, then here is another statement that may be a tad more brassy: For the Celtics to win a title, one critical (perhaps essential) player is none other than Edward Lewis Pinckney.

Yes, you heard right. Eddie is the man. And there is no little bit of irony in this statement, since I actually wrote a column a couple of months ago giving old Ed a big Bronx cheer for his contributions, or lackthereof. Cooler heads prevailed and said column never saw the light of day. It was spooky, though, because the day after I wrote the thing, Pinckney goes out and scores 16 points and gets big headlines in the paper. It was as if he knew and was responding.

Today, you can only say one thing about Mr. Pinckney: He is earning his paycheck...and then some. Pinckney is big, strong and athletic. He has been an enigma to many since his Villanova days. He came out as the 10th pick in the entire draft in 1985 and was projected by Phoenix as a smooth, strong small forward.

I think it's fair to say that Ed didn't fulfill the expectations. Until this season. In fact, until about two month ago. Suddenly, Pinckney is showing the talent everyone assumed was there. It is fantastic to watch the emergence of this ballplayer, in the

midst of a critical stretch of a critical season. Chris Ford said Eddie was working hard. And how!

Pinckney is picking up more minutes and filling a key role. When Kevin McHale went out with a sprain in Seattle, Pinckney filled in as sixth man and was simply awesome. He kept getting great position and pulling momentous offensive rebounds. He played drumtight defense, usually on the opposition's toughest guy, blocked a few tough shots, put in a few more impossible rebound baskets, and was a quiet MVP in several games. The stats sheet didn't buzz

with his numbers, but Ed's teammates, coaches and the media knew what he meant. The fans know too.

For the Celtics to win the title, Pinckney must step up and play that way, at least in critical stretches, for the rest of the season and into the play-offs. He gives the Celtics the piece of the equation they were searching for when they signed Derek Smith: a quick, agile, small forward who could shut down a hot Bernard King, Dominique Wilkins, James Worthy, or Xavier McDaniel.

Now Derek might show up at some point and fill that role himself. I'm betting that won't happen this year, if ever. Smith doesn't seem to be recovering as the team had hoped and with Pinckney doing the job, the pressure is off an immediate comeback for Smith. Maybe they'll set him up to start fresh next year.

For now, Ed Pinckney isn't thinking about such things. He is concentrating on filling a key role, a role that looms ever more important as the play-offs get closer. Think of the potency of the frontcourt if Chris Ford can come at an opposing team with combinations of Bird, McHale, Gamble, and Pinckney at forward. There's a lot of experience, talent and young quickness in that mix. More than anything, Pinckney's emergence gives the Celtics a solid 8-man rotation (8 with Joe Kleine) that is required to claw through the grueling play-offs.

For me, there is tremendous satisfaction seeing Pinckney play well. He has always been a terrific guy, a family man, a gentleman. He's the kind of player you want to root for. He played perhaps the perfect game for the perfect team when his 1985 Villanova Wildcats defeated Patrick Ewing's Georgetown team for the NCAA title. In fact, Pinckney's entire team played perfectly; it had to beat Georgetown, which was the overwhelming favorite. But Ed lifted his game that night, and was rewarded with the MVP trophy.

He had shown flashes throughout his pro career. It has been frustrating for those of us who wanted and expected him to be a star already. But maybe expectations were overblown and Pinckney's strength is emerging gradually. One thing is certain: If he is going to blossom as a full-fledged NBA force, he has picked a perfect time to do it.

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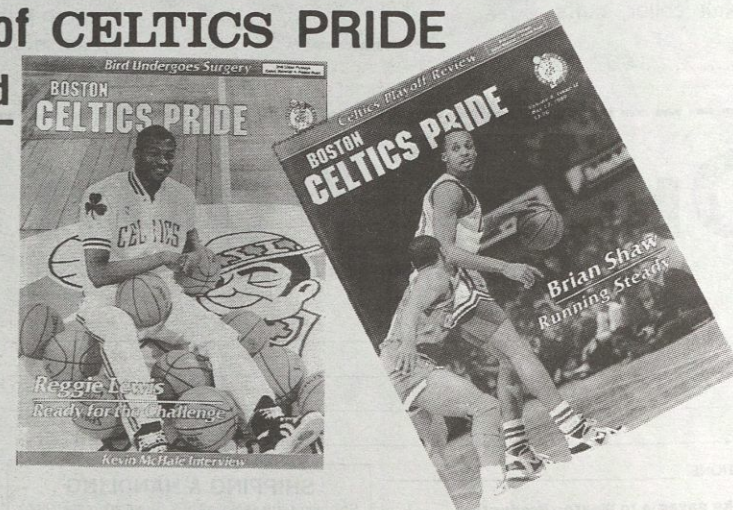
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